



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



FRIDAY — 7 OCT 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	10/06 Military to strip Confederate names off bases
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/6/lloyd-austin-approves-plan-strip-confederate-names/
GIST	Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin on Thursday signed off on a plan to strip any mention of the Confederacy from U.S. military bases, including renaming the Army's legendary Fort Bragg and Fort Hood, in a process that critics said was a prime example of "woke" attitudes in President Biden's Pentagon.

Mr. Austin, whose endorsement of the plan was widely expected, said the changes would be implemented “as soon as possible.”

The report that recommends the stripping of all references to Confederate figures arrived at Mr. Austin’s desk 18 months after Congress mandated a Naming Commission to review the issue.

The three-part report, which included consultations with historians and local communities, covered U.S. Army posts named after former Confederate generals such as Braxton Bragg and John Bell Hood; items named for Confederates at the U.S. Military Academy and U.S. Naval Academy; and other Confederate-linked items within the Department of Defense.

“I concur with all of the Naming Commission’s recommendations, including the renaming plan,” Mr. Austin wrote in a memo for senior military leaders. “I am committed to implementing all of the Commission’s recommendations as soon as possible.”

The move to change the base names has proven to be a political football. President Trump vowed to block the name changes while in office, saying they were a denial of American history and military tradition, but Congress overruled his veto of the massive annual defense authorization bill in late 2020 that created the renaming panel — the only veto override of Mr. Trump’s term in office.

More rebrandings are in store: The independent commission also is backing changes to two Navy ships — the USS Chancellorsville and the USNS Maury — and a host of monuments and tributes on military bases, the service academies at West Point and Annapolis and other sites that honor the Confederacy.

The Defense Department won’t begin implementing the renaming plan before the expiration of a 90-day waiting period that was required under the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act.

The Naming Commission recommended new names for nine Army posts. They include Fort Gordon, Georgia, which will be renamed Fort Eisenhower after the former president and five-star general. Fort Benning, Georgia, will be renamed Fort Moore in honor of Lt. Gen. Hal Moore and his wife, Julia Moore.

“Secretary Austin is grateful for the work of the Commission and thanks them for their dedicated efforts and recommendations,” Air Force Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder, a Defense Department spokesman, told reporters at the Pentagon.

Mr. Austin told Pentagon officials to immediately begin changing the process used to choose names and memorialize historical figures on military installations because those topics are not subject to the congressional waiting period.

The Defense Department will dip into its funds to implement the recommendations from the Naming Commission, Secretary Austin wrote in the memo.

“The Commission’s thorough and historically-informed work has put the department on the path to meet congressional intent, and to remove from U.S. military facilities all names, symbols, displays, monuments and paraphernalia that honor or commemorate the Confederacy,” Mr. Austin wrote.

The commission estimated that renaming the nine U.S. Army posts that honor Confederate officers would cost a total of \$21 million if the installations rebrand everything from welcome marquees and street signs to water towers and hospital doors, The Associated Press reported in August. Removing every vestige of Confederate-related names and memorials would cost the taxpayer about triple that amount, according to projections.

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HEADLINE	10/07 Russia makes gains in Donetsk
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/10/07/Ukraine-Donetsk-Kherson-Russia/4081665144543/

GIST	<p>Oct. 7 (UPI) -- Leaders of a rogue Ukrainian territory said on Friday it has pushed out Ukrainian troops in three locations while Kyiv said it has made new gains in the southern Kherson region in the latest fighting.</p> <p>The unrecognized Moscow-backed Donetsk People's Republic said it captured three settlements in Donetsk from Kyiv. Ukrainian officials said that Russia blew up a dam in the Donetsk region, flooding a nearby area.</p> <p>Ukraine's State Emergency Services said a Russian strike on a residential area in Zaporizhzhia on Thursday killed 11 people and rescue operations are ongoing to try to find survivors.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that Ukrainian forces have recaptured 193 square miles of territory in the Kherson region, some of the same area Russian President Vladimir Putin claims that Moscow has annexed.</p> <p>Ukrainian military officials said, though, the Russian military retreat in Kherson appeared to be more orderly and strategic, that withdrawals in eastern Ukraine, signal a possible upcoming response to Kyiv's advances.</p> <p>The British Defense Ministry said hasty Russian retreats have left so much military equipment behind that it now makes up a large portion of Ukraine's military hardware.</p> <p>"Ukraine has likely captured at least 440 Russian Main Battle Tanks, and around 650 other armored vehicles since the invasion," the ministry said on Twitter. "Over half of Ukraine's currently fielded tank fleet potentially consists of captured vehicles.</p> <p>"The failure of Russian crews to destroy intact equipment before withdrawing or surrendering highlights their poor state of training and low levels of battle discipline."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Covid wave looms in Europe
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/covid-wave-looms-europe-booster-campaign-makes-slow-start-2022-10-06/
GIST	<p>Oct 6 (Reuters) - A new COVID-19 wave appears to be brewing in Europe as cooler weather arrives, with public health experts warning that vaccine fatigue and confusion over types of available vaccines will likely limit booster uptake.</p> <p>Omicron subvariants BA.4/5 that dominated this summer are still behind the majority of infections, but newer Omicron subvariants are gaining ground. Hundreds of new forms of Omicron are being tracked by scientists, World Health Organisation (WHO) officials said this week.</p> <p>WHO data released late on Wednesday showed that cases in the European Union (EU) reached 1.5 million last week, up 8% from the prior week, despite a dramatic fall in testing. Globally, case numbers continue to decline.</p> <p>Hospitalisation numbers across many countries in the 27-nation bloc, as well as Britain, have gone up in recent weeks.</p> <p>In the week ended Oct 4, COVID-19 hospital admissions with symptoms jumped nearly 32% in Italy, while intensive care admissions rose about 21%, compared to the week before, according to data compiled by independent scientific foundation Gimbe.</p> <p>Over the same week, COVID hospitalisations in Britain saw a 45% increase versus the week earlier.</p>

Omicron-adapted vaccines have launched in Europe as of September, with two types of shots addressing the BA.1 as well as the BA.4/5 subvariants made available alongside existing first-generation vaccines. In Britain, only the BA.1-tailored shots have been given the green light.

European and British officials have endorsed the latest boosters only for a select groups of people, including the elderly and those with compromised immune systems. Complicating matters further is the "choice" of vaccine as a booster, which will likely add to confusion, public health experts said.

But willingness to get yet another shot, which could be a fourth or fifth for some, is wearing thin.

"For those who may be less concerned about their risk, the messaging that it is all over coupled with the lack of any major publicity campaign is likely to reduce uptake," said Martin McKee, professor of European public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

"So on balance I fear that uptake will be quite a bit lower."

"Another confounder is that quite a high proportion of the population might have also had a COVID episode in recent months," said Penny Ward, visiting professor in pharmaceutical medicine at King's College London.

Some may erroneously feel that having had a complete primary course and then having fallen ill with COVID means they will remain immune, she added.

Since Sept. 5, when the roll-out of new vaccines began in the European Union, about 40 million vaccine doses produced by Pfizer-BioNTech (22UAy.DE) and Moderna (MRNA.O) have been delivered to member states, according to data from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

However, weekly vaccine doses administered in the EU were only between 1 million and 1.4 million during September, compared with 6-10 million per week during the year-earlier period, ECDC data showed.

Perhaps the biggest challenge to uptake is the perception that the pandemic is over, creating a false sense of security.

"There must be some complacency in that life seems to have gone back to normal – at least with regards COVID and people now have other financial and war-related worries," said Adam Finn, chair of ETAGE, an expert group advising the WHO on vaccine preventable diseases in Europe.

He added that some law-makers, too, were dropping the ball.

Italy's Gimbe science foundation said the government, soon to be replaced after an election, was ill prepared for the autumn-winter season, and highlighted that a publication on the government's management of the pandemic had been blocked.

The health ministry declined to comment.

Meanwhile, British officials last week warned that renewed circulation of flu and a resurgence in COVID-19 could pile pressure on the already stretched National Health Service (NHS).

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HEADLINE	10/07 Missiles, drones hit Ukraine city again
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SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-iran-middle-east-business-5b8bcee162e155e58423f64671c7b3a5?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=TopNews&utm_campaign=position_01
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The death toll from a missile attack on apartment buildings in a southern Ukrainian city rose to 11 as more Russian missiles and — for the first time — explosive packed drones targeted Ukrainian-held Zaporizhzhia on Friday.</p> <p>As the war sparked by Russia’s February invasion of its neighbor ground on, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to human rights organizations in Russia and Ukraine, and an activist jailed in Russian ally Belarus.</p> <p>Asked by a reporter whether the prize shared by Belarus rights activist Ales Bialiatski, the Russian group Memorial and the Ukrainian organization Center for Civil Liberties should be seen as a “birthday gift” to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who turned 70 on Friday, committee chair Berit Reiss-Andersen said no.</p> <p>“The prize is not addressing President Putin, not for his birthday or in any other sense, except that his government, as the government in Belarus, is representing an authoritarian government that is suppressing human rights activists,” Reiss-Andersen said.</p> <p>Putin this week illegally claimed four regions of Ukraine as Russian territory, including the Zaporizhzhia region that is home to a sprawling nuclear power plant under Russian occupation; the city of the same name remains under Ukrainian control.</p> <p>Fighting near the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant has alarmed the U.N.’s atomic energy watchdog. An accident there could release 10 times the amount of potentially lethal radioactivity than the world’s worst nuclear accident did in Chernobyl 36 years ago, Ukrainian Environmental Protection Minister Ruslan Strilets said Friday.</p> <p>“The situation with the occupation, shelling, and mining of the Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plants by Russian troops is causing consequences that will have a global character,” Strilets told The Associated Press in an email interview while attending a U.N. conference in Cyprus.</p> <p>With its army losing ground to a Ukrainian counteroffensive in the country’s south and east, Russia has deployed Iranian-made drones to attack Ukrainian targets. The unmanned, disposable “kamikaze drones” are cheaper and less sophisticated than missiles but have proved effective at causing damage to targets on the ground.</p> <p>The regional governor, Oleksandr Starukh, said Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones damaged two infrastructure facilities in the city of Zaporizhzhia, the first time they were used there. He said missiles also struck the city again, injuring one person.</p> <p>The Emergency Services of Ukraine said the toll of Russian S-300 missile strikes on the city a day earlier rose to 11 and another 21 people were rescued from the rubble of destroyed apartments.</p> <p>“This was not a random hit, but a series of missiles aimed at multi-story buildings,” Starukh wrote on his Telegram channel.</p> <p>Russia was reported to have converted the S-300 from its original use as a long-range anti-aircraft weapon into a missile for ground attacks because of a shortage of other, more suitable weapons.</p> <p>The Ukrainian military said most of the drones it shot down Thursday and into Friday were the Iranian-made Shahed-136. The weapons are unlikely to significantly affect the course of the war, however, the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said.</p> <p>“They have used many drones against civilian targets in rear areas, likely hoping to generate nonlinear effects through terror. Such efforts are not succeeding,” analysts at the think tank wrote.</p>

Meanwhile, Ukraine's ability to capture and put back into service Russian tanks and other equipment continues to be an important factor in its forces' push to repel the invasion.

Ukrainian forces have captured at least 440 tanks and about 650 armored vehicles since the start of the war, Britain's Ministry of Defense said Friday.

"The failure of Russian crews to destroy intact equipment before withdrawing or surrendering highlights their poor state of training and low levels of battle discipline," the British said. "With Russian formations under severe strain in several sectors and increasingly demoralized troops, Russia will likely continue to lose heavy weaponry."

The Ukrainian military also said Friday that 500 former criminals have been mobilized to reinforce Russian ranks in the eastern Donetsk region, where Ukrainian forces have retaken some territory. The new units are commanded by officers drawn from law enforcement, the military said.

U.S. President Joe Biden warned Thursday that Putin has driven the risk of nuclear "Armageddon" to the highest level since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Russian officials have spoken of the possibility of using tactical nuclear weapons to defend Russia's territory, including the newly annexed regions of Ukraine.

Speaking at a fundraiser for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, Biden said Putin was "not joking when he talks about the use of tactical nuclear weapons or biological or chemical weapons."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held another telephone call with Putin on Friday to discuss bilateral ties and the war in Ukraine.

Erdogan told Putin that Turkey was ready to fulfil its part for a "peaceful resolution of the Ukraine issue in a manner that would be to the benefit of everyone," according to a statement from the Turkish leader's office.

In the Czech capital, European Union leaders converged on Prague Castle to try to bridge significant differences over a natural gas price cap as winter approaches and Russia's war on Ukraine fuels a major energy crisis.

As the Europeans bolster their support for Ukraine in the form of weapons, money and aid, Russia has reduced or cut off natural gas to 13 member nations, leading to surging gas and electricity prices that could climb higher as demand peaks during the cold months.

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HEADLINE	10/07 Grim reality Russia mercenaries in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/06/europe/wagner-ukraine-struggles-marat-gabidullin-cmd-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>The Ukrainians' bodies lay side-by-side on the grass, the earth beside them splayed open by a crater. Dragged to the spot by Russian mercenaries, the victims' arms pointed to where they had died.</p> <p>"Let's plant a grenade on them," a voice says in husky Russian, in what appears to be a plan to booby-trap the bodies.</p> <p>"There is no need for a grenade, we will just bash them in," another says of the Ukrainian soldiers who will come to collect the bodies. The mercenaries then realize they have run out of ammunition.</p> <p>These events seen and heard on battlefield video, exclusive to CNN, along with access to Wagner recruits fighting in Ukraine, and candid, rare interviews CNN has conducted with a former Wagner commander now seeking asylum in Europe, combine to give an unprecedented look at the state of Russia's premier mercenary force.</p>

While problems of supply and morale, as well as allegations of war crimes have been well documented among regular Russian troops, the existence of similar crises among Wagner mercenaries, often described as [President Vladimir Putin](#)'s off-the-books shock troops, is a dire omen for Russia's war in Ukraine.

In the shadow of the Kremlin

Wagner forces have for several years enjoyed global notoriety. But as Putin's "special military operation" in Ukraine comes apart at the seams, and the announcement of a "partial mobilization" for much-needed conscripts has prompted more than 200,000 Russian citizens to flee to neighboring countries, the cracks in this supposedly elite force are showing.

Since its [creation in 2014](#), Wagner's mandate, international footprint and reputation have swelled. Widely considered by analysts to be a Kremlin-approved private military company, its fighters have battled in Ukraine since the Russian invasion in 2014 and in [Syria](#), as well as operating in several African countries, including Sudan, Libya, Mozambique, Mali and the Central African Republic.

With a reputation in [Russia](#) as a reliable and valuable force, Wagner private soldiers have bolstered Moscow's global interests and military resources, already stretched fighting a war in Syria in support of the Assad regime. As CNN has reported, their deployments have often been key to Russian control of lucrative resources, from [Sudanese gold](#) to Syrian oil.

Flaunting modern equipment in recruiting videos, with heavy weapons and even helicopters, they resemble US Special Forces.

"I am convinced that if Russia did not use mercenary groups on such a massive scale, there would be no question of the success that the Russian army has achieved so far," Marat Gabidullin – a former Wagner commander who was once in charge of 95 mercenaries in Syria – told CNN.

In touch with former comrades now fighting in Ukraine, Gabidullin said that Russia's use of mercenaries has ramped up as the Kremlin's execution of its war has fallen into disarray. Ukraine's Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov told CNN that Wagner troops were being deployed in the "most difficult and important missions" in Ukraine, playing a key role in Russian victories in Mariupol and Kherson.

The Kremlin did not respond to CNN's requests for comment.

Limited official information about Wagner and long-standing Kremlin denials about its existence and ties to the Russian state have only added to its infamy and allure, while helping the group to cloud analysis of its exact capabilities and activities.

In reality, though, Wagner – like Russia – is struggling in Ukraine, according to the video testimony of the group's own mercenary fighters.

Lack of experience

More than seven months of fighting have thrown a harsh light on failings in Russia's military performance in Ukraine. Russia's small gains, especially compared to Putin's initial ambitious targets in the war, have come at huge cost, decimating frontline units and starving many of manpower, as well as critically important experience.

Battlefield experience is one of two factors ex-Wagner commander Gabidullin – who left the group in 2019 and has since published a memoir of his time working for them – says separates mercenaries from regular Russian troops, the other being money.

"The backbone of these groups was always made up of very experienced people who had passed through several wars anyway," he told CNN.

After serving as a junior officer with an airborne unit in the dying days of the Soviet Union, Gabidullin returned to military life as a Wagner recruit following Russia's 2014 invasion of eastern Ukraine. He said

many key Wagner personnel may, like him, have previously fought in Ukraine as well as in Syria, gaining valuable combat experience alien to most regular Russian troops.

“They have more weighty, more meaningful experience than the army. The army are young soldiers who were forced to sign a contract, they have no experience,” he said.

It’s what makes such paramilitary forces in Ukraine, of which Wagner is just one, so valuable to Russia.

“The Russian army cannot handle [the war] without mercenaries,” according to Gabidullin, adding that there’s “a very big myth, a very big obfuscation about a strong Russian army.”

Today, at least 5,000 mercenaries tied to the Wagner group are operating with Russian forces in Ukraine, Andrii Yusov, a spokesperson for Ukraine’s defense intelligence agency who has been monitoring Wagner in Ukraine, told CNN. This figure was backed up by a French intelligence source who noted that some Wagner fighters had left the African continent to bolster the group’s efforts in Ukraine.

The Kremlin has increasingly relied on Wagner fighters as assault troops, according to Ukraine’s defense ministry. Hidden from official Russian death counts and available for deniable operations, they’ve borne a burden of casualties that have been politically sensitive for Putin in Russia.

“Wagner has been suffering high losses in Ukraine, especially and unsurprisingly among young and inexperienced fighters,” according to a senior US defense source speaking in September.

A simple equation underlies the employment of Wagner forces, according to Gabidullin: “Russian peace for American dollars.”

The mercenaries can earn up to \$5,000 per month.

Wagner fighters have even been offered bonuses – all paid in US dollars – for wiping out Ukrainian tanks or units, according to a senior Ukrainian defense source and based on the intelligence gathered on Wagner since the start of the war by Ukrainian authorities.

According to the UK’s Ministry of Defense, Wagner fighters have also been allocated specific sectors of the front line, operating almost as normal army units, a stark change from their history of distinct, limited missions in Ukraine.

Yusov also said that Wagner is increasingly being used to patch holes in the Russian front line. This was also confirmed by a US senior defense official, who added that Wagner is being used across different front lines unlike Chechen fighters, for instance, who are focused around the Russian offensive aimed at Bakhmut.

That has led to significant logistical challenges, he says, with the need to supply Wagner troops with ammunition, food and support for extended operations, all while Ukraine has upped its attacks on Russia’s logistics.

Bodycam footage purportedly from Wagner fighters in August passed to CNN by the Ukrainian defense ministry shows mercenaries complaining of a lack of body armor and helmets. In another video a fighter complains about orders to attack Ukrainian positions when his unit is out of ammunition.

Shoes to fill

Wagner’s ranks have also been depleted by battlefield losses. In response, they’ve turned to unusually public recruitment.

Billboards have sprung up in Russia calling for new recruits to Wagner. Adorned with a phone number and picture of camouflage-clad fighters, their slogan – “Orchestra ‘W’ Awaits You” – alludes to Wagner’s past nickname as the “orchestra.”

The wide net cast by the group's recruiting efforts matches a shift from its past secrecy. Even Putin ally Yevgeny Prigozhin finally admitted his role as Wagner chief in late September, having spent years trying to distance himself from the mercenary group through repeated denials, and even taking Russian media outlets investigating him to court.

Wagner's invitations to contact recruiters have also spread via social media and online. One recruiter contacted by CNN offered a monthly salary of "at least 240,000 rubles" (about \$4,000) with the length of a "business trip" – code for a deployment – of at least four months. Much of the recruiter's message listed medical conditions that excluded applicants from joining: from cancer to hepatitis C and substance abuse.

In contrast to its image as a military elite organization, a Wagner recruiter had one startling admission regarding recruits when contacted by a CNN journalist: no military experience necessary.

The message finished with a code word – "Morgan" – that applicants were to give at the gate of the Wagner facility in Krasnodar, Russia.

Jailhouse recruits

In September, video surfaced appearing to be Prigozhin recruiting prisoners from Russian jails for Wagner. His offer: a promise of clemency for six months' combat service in Ukraine, propping up Russia's flailing invasion.

It's a move that would have been unthinkable months ago for the private military company once considered one of the most professional units in the Kremlin's arsenal.

"An act of desperation" is how the ex-Wagner commander Gabidullin described the appeal.

Prigozhin's apparent jailhouse recruitment drive matches [broader Russian efforts to mobilize the country's prison population for combat](#), offering monthly salaries worth thousands of dollars and death payments of tens of thousands of dollars to recruits' families.

For both Wagner comrades and their Ukrainian adversaries, that's worrying.

"[Wagner] are ready to send anyone, just anyone," Ukrainian Prosecutor Yuriy Belousov, told CNN. "There is no criteria for professionalism anymore."

Working on Ukrainian investigations into possible Russian war crimes, Belousov fears that this lax recruiting will see the scale of war crimes increase.

Although direct recruitment from prisons is a new step, Gabidullin said that a criminal record hadn't been an obstacle to employment with Wagner. He himself says he had served three years in prison for murder and told CNN of prominent Wagner commanders who had served around the world with the group after prison sentences.

The enemy within

Wagner's struggles in Ukraine have set in motion a wider problem: discontent in its ranks. For a group that depends on the appeal of its salaries and work, that's critical.

From intercepted phone calls, Ukrainian intelligence services in August noted a "general decline in morale and the psychological state" of Wagner troops, Ukrainian defense intelligence spokesman Yusov said. It's a trend he's also seen in Russian troops more broadly.

The reduction in Wagner recruitment requirements point to demoralization too, he said, and the number of "truly professional soldiers who are willing to volunteer to fight with Wagner" is also decreasing.

	<p>Ex-commander Gabidullin, who says he talks to his old comrades on an almost daily basis, explained that this demoralization was due to their dissatisfaction “with the overall organization of the fighting: [the Russian leadership’s] inability to make competent decisions, to organize battles.”</p> <p>For one mercenary who contacted Gabidullin for advice, that incompetence was too much. “He called me and said: ‘That’s it, I won’t be there anymore. I’m not taking part in this anymore,’” Gabidullin told CNN.</p> <p>And as Russia’s prospects of victory in Ukraine – or even claiming a positive outcome – look thin, life as a Russian mercenary doesn’t hold the same appeal it might once have had.</p> <p>“It may be that the money isn’t worth it anymore,” Ukrainian prosecutor Belousov said.</p> <p>In one of the many videos streaming out of Ukraine’s frontlines, the grim reality of Wagner’s war is plain to see in footage provided to CNN, which allegedly shows the group’s operations.</p> <p>In one clip, a fallen Wagner mercenary lies, in death, almost peacefully, his left hand gently gripping the black earth. Around him, the battlefield smolders alongside dead bodies and the flaming wreckage of their armored vehicles. Occasional shots crackle through the smoke.</p> <p>“I’m sorry, bro, I’m sorry,” the soldier’s comrade says, lightly patting his back, stripped of his shirt by the battle that killed him. “Let’s get out of here, if they shoot us, we’ll lie next to him.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/07 Ukraine battlefield gains: 200sq. miles
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/07/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#zelensky-battlefield-gains
GIST	<p>Nearly 500 square kilometers of territory, or almost 200 square miles, have been retaken from Moscow’s forces in Ukraine’s southern Kherson region in less than a week, President Volodymyr Zelensky said, as an official in a major hub for evacuees from the south warned that Russia was ratcheting up shelling in the face of its rapid losses.</p> <p>Mr. Zelensky, in an overnight address, said that since the start of the month, a counteroffensive by Ukrainian forces had reclaimed “more than half a thousand square kilometers of territory and dozens of settlements” from Russian forces in the Kherson region.</p> <p>Since Russia’s illegal annexation of four regions, Kyiv has pushed on with its drive to recapture areas that have been under Russian occupation for months. Ukrainian officials have appealed for everybody living in areas ahead of the advance to evacuate, and thousands have fled the fighting.</p> <p>In Zaporizhzhia, a large regional center on the Dnipro River that is often the first port of call for civilians fleeing Russian-controlled territory to the south, the death toll from an intense Thursday morning attack on a residential area rose to 11, local officials said.</p> <p>Anatolii Kurtiev, the acting mayor of Zaporizhzhia, said at an early morning press briefing that the intensity of shelling had been incredibly high in recent days, and that a number of bodies were likely still under the rubble.</p> <p>“We had many victims who have been injured and are in hospital, and 15 other people have been reported missing, so we continue searching for them,” he said. He added that the attacks were likely a response to the significant losses of territory by Russian forces in the south.</p> <p>Large-scale humanitarian convoys out of the city have been suspended. Russian forces were also shelling critical infrastructure in the city, he said, but the water and electricity supply was still working.</p>

	<p>In his address, Mr. Zelensky noted concerns about the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant — Europe’s largest — which has been at the center of competing claims of control by the Russians and Ukrainians, and where recurring shelling has inflamed fears of a nuclear catastrophe.</p> <p>He said that if the power coming from the plant was cut, it would hurt not only Ukraine but also the European Union, to which Ukraine exports energy.</p> <p>He noted that there were around 500 Russians occupying the station, posing serious danger to the operation of the plant. “This is nothing but five hundred risks of disaster,” he said.</p> <p>The chief of the U.N.’s nuclear agency, Rafael Mariano Grossi, met with Mr. Zelensky on Thursday in Kyiv, noting in a statement that it was a “particularly dangerous moment for the safety and security” of the plant.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/07 Nobel Peace Prize to rights advocates
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/07/world/nobel-peace-prize
GIST	<p>The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded on Friday to rights advocates in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus who have become symbols of resistance and accountability at a time when Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has set off the largest ground war in Europe since World War II.</p> <p>The laureates — Ales Bialiatski, a jailed Belarusian activist; Memorial, a Russian organization; and the Center for Civil Liberties in Ukraine — have emerged as some of the starkest challengers to the widespread misinformation and harmful myths disseminated by authoritarian leaders and fueled by globalization, digital connectedness and new methods of surveillance.</p> <p>“The Peace Prize laureates represent civil society in their home countries,” Berit Reiss-Andersen, the chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, said in announcing the awards. “They have for many years promoted the right to criticize power and protect the fundamental rights of citizens.”</p> <p>The committee said it had chosen the three laureates because it wanted to honor the champions of “human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence” in the neighboring countries of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. Their work has taken on new significance since February, when President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia invaded neighboring Ukraine, displacing millions of people and destabilizing the entire region.</p> <p>The prize was an implicit rebuke to Mr. Putin, whose tenure has been punctuated with violent crackdowns on dissidents and critics at home — and whose 70th birthday was on Friday, an overlap noted by several observers.</p> <p>“On Putin’s 70th birthday, the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to a Russian human rights group that he shut down, a Ukrainian human rights group that is documenting his war crimes, and a Belarusian human rights activist whom his ally Lukashenko has imprisoned,” Kenneth Roth, the former executive director of Human Rights Watch, said on Twitter.</p> <p>Asked whether this year’s choice of winners was “a timely birthday president,” Ms. Reiss-Andersen said, “This prize is not addressing President Putin, not for his birthday or in any other sense — except that his government, as the government in Belarus, is representing an authoritarian government that is suppressing human rights activists.”</p> <p>The Center for Civil Liberties in Ukraine has engaged in efforts to identify and document evidence of Russian war crimes since the invasion began, Ms. Reiss-Andersen said, adding that the group was “playing a pioneering role with a view to holding the guilty parties accountable for their crimes.”</p> <p>The committee praised the organization for taking a stand to “strengthen Ukrainian civil society and pressure the authorities to make Ukraine a full-fledged democracy.”</p>

There were 343 candidates for this year's prize, including 251 people and 92 organizations — the second-highest total ever, trailing only 2016. Although there was no clear front-runner, some of the names attracting attention included [President Volodymyr Zelensky](#) of Ukraine; [Aleksei A. Navalny](#), a jailed Russian dissident; [Svetlana Tikhanovskaya](#), a Belarusian opposition politician; the World Health Organization; and the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Zelensky was the bookmakers' favorite.

Last year, the Peace Prize was shared by two journalists, [Maria Ressa and Dmitry A. Muratov](#), "for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace," the Nobel committee said.

Mr. Muratov, the editor in chief of the newspaper Novaya Gazeta, has been described as one of the most prominent defenders of free speech in Russia. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Novaya Gazeta was [forced to suspend publication](#) amid mounting government censorship.

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HEADLINE	10/07 Covid defies China's lockdowns
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/07/world/asia/covid-china-lockdowns-chaos.html
GIST	<p>In China's far west region of Xinjiang, officials imposed a near-total lockdown and made a rare admission of failure in their handling of a Covid outbreak. In Inner Mongolia in the north, the authorities vowed "all-out" efforts to cut the spread of the virus. And in a popular travel destination in Yunnan, in China's south, the government canceled flights, trapping crowds of angry tourists at an airport.</p> <p>China is facing its largest flare-up of Covid cases in a month, complicating its preparations for an all-important Communist Party meeting where Xi Jinping is expected to expand his authority and claim another term in power. Provincial and local officials have vowed to stop the spread of the coronavirus from "spilling over" to Beijing, the capital, where the meeting will be held.</p> <p>Daily Covid counts have more than doubled in the past week, to around 1,400 cases on Friday, in the country of 1.4 billion people — a tally that remains tiny by global standards. But Chinese authorities are under immense pressure to ensure that nothing disrupts the party congress, which starts Oct. 16. They have responded by ramping up restrictions that many already deem excessive. They are locking down regions and cities and mandating mass testing and quarantines, disrupting life for millions of people and drawing public complaints.</p> <p>The authorities are sticking closely to their "zero Covid" policy of eliminating infections, despite the enormous economic and social cost of the strategy. Mr. Xi has made "zero Covid" a political imperative, linking support for the policy to support for the Communist Party, as he looks to hail China's success in curbing infections as a sign of the superiority of Beijing's authoritarian system.</p> <p>China's pandemic strategy is "almost a political campaign to show loyalty to Xi Jinping himself," said Willy Lam, an adjunct professor of politics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. "This makes the local officials even more anxious because they all want to stay in the good graces of Xi Jinping."</p> <p>Covid infections have surged in part because of the country's weeklong National Day holiday, which started on Oct. 1. Despite the appeals of health officials for people to limit travel, many flocked to tourist hot spots. Now, they are stranded after flights and trains were canceled.</p> <p>Lockdowns have been punishing for the residents of less-developed regions. Shortages of food and medicine have been common in those areas, prompting residents to take to social media with complaints and pleas for help.</p>

The fast-spreading Omicron variant has constantly slipped through China's tight restrictions. Officials in Xinjiang were forced to admit that lapses in their approach led to cases spilling over from the region to other provinces and major cities, including Beijing.

Liu Sushe, the vice chairman of the Xinjiang region, conceded this week that the area of 22 million people was facing its most difficult public health emergency ever. He said some officials had been lax in their work, failing to properly impose measures to quash infections. Mr. Liu said measures, such as compulsory mass testing, may have even contributed to spreading the virus, as some health workers who were not wearing proper protection became infected themselves.

On Tuesday, Xinjiang effectively banned residents and visitors from leaving, stopping all trains and buses from departing the region and stopping most flights. But such lockdowns could lead to more problems. Last month, residents in Yining, a city in Xinjiang, flooded social media platforms to plead for food and other provisions, including sanitary pads and medicine, during a long lockdown. Shortage of daily necessities, as well as the chaotic enforcement of attempts to curb the outbreak, had already forced local officials to admit failings.

Similar problems in other areas, most notably in Shanghai earlier this year and in Tibet a few weeks ago, have led to anger about the human and economic toll of the harsh measures.

In the southwest province of Yunnan, angry travelers took to the Chinese social media site Weibo to vent their anger over being stranded at the Xishuangbanna airport after flights were canceled on short notice. On Tuesday, the Xishuangbanna prefecture's health authorities tightened restrictions, effectively preventing most people from leaving.

Some videos shared online showed what appeared to be guards or police officers clad in white hazmat suits carrying guns and riot shields at the airport. The weapons set off confrontations, leading to exasperated tourists shouting: "Who are you pointing the guns at?" The New York Times has not been able to independently verify the videos, which have mostly been censored on Chinese social media but continued to circulate widely on Twitter. Multiple calls to the airport rang unanswered on Friday.

On Weibo, commenters who said they were in areas under lockdown in Yunnan complained about not knowing when they could leave. Many wrote that they were worried about getting basic necessities, with most supermarkets closed. Some stranded travelers formed self-help groups to exchange information.

In Inner Mongolia, Covid cases surged to nearly 700 on Friday — the highest number among Chinese provinces — from just a handful a week ago.

At a meeting chaired by Sun Shaocheng, the top party official of Inner Mongolia, officials were instructed to stop infections by "killing chickens with a knife for slaughtering cows," a play on a Chinese idiom, to indicate that overkill was desired. "Act faster, prevent spread and spillover, especially to Beijing," an official readout said. Since then, several cities and counties in the region have been placed under lockdown.

Overkill is increasingly the norm. In the tropical island province of Hainan, often dubbed the Hawaii of China, the authorities ordered mass testing after just two cases were detected on Monday. The province has only recently emerged from a lockdown in August of the popular tourist city of Sanya, which trapped tens of thousands of travelers.

Public anger over the lockdowns has at times soared to unusual levels, including last month after a bus transferring people to quarantine crashed, killing 27 people in the southern city of Guiyang. On social media, debates raged over whether the Covid measures have caused more damage and disruption than the virus itself.

	<p>Officials have struggled to fund and staff the efforts to stop the virus. In many poorer areas, local government finances have become strained, particularly as they have sought to enforce mass testing, often on millions of people every few days.</p> <p>“It’s simply that quite a few localities have been so exhausted,” said Dali Yang, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago. “One of the big challenges is that all those people have been on the front line for such a long time, the incentives are beginning to diminish in certain localities, some of the local authorities are running out of money.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Florida residents return to battered homes
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/06/hurricane-ian-florida-ron-desantis-residents-return-sanibel-captiva-pine-island
GIST	<p>Residents of south-west Florida were on Thursday returning for a first look at damage wreaked on their homes by Hurricane Ian, as the storm’s death toll continued to rise and details emerged about the victims.</p> <p>Inhabitants of Sanibel, Captiva and Pine Island were among the first to get a glimpse after authorities still searching for survivors from the 28 September storm gave the go-ahead for civilians to return.</p> <p>A steady stream of residents arrived, mostly on small chartered motorboats, after sections of the Sanibel and Pine Island causeways, the only road links to the mainland, were swept away by 150mph winds and a 12ft (3.6 metres) storm surge.</p> <p>“We feel, as a community, that if we leave the island, abandon it, nobody is going to take care of that problem of fixing our road in and out,” said a Pine Island resident, Leslie Arias.</p> <p>The number of storm-related deaths rose to at least 101 on Thursday, eight days after the storm made landfall in southwest Florida. According to reports from the Florida medical examiners commission, 98 of those deaths were in Florida. Five people were also killed in North Carolina, three in Cuba and one in Virginia.</p> <p>Ian is the second-deadliest storm to hit the mainland US in the 21st century after Hurricane Katrina, which left more than 1,800 people dead in 2005. The deadliest hurricane ever to hit the US was the Galveston Hurricane in 1900 that killed as many as 8,000 people.</p> <p>But Ian’s fury makes it the deadliest storm to strike Florida since the Labor Day hurricane of 1935 claimed more than 430 lives.</p> <p>The oldest victim of Ian was a 96-year-old man found trapped under a car in high water in Charlotte county, the medical examiners’ report said.</p> <p>A 73-year-old man in Lee county “shot himself after seeing property damage due to the hurricane”.</p> <p>In Manatee county, a 71-year-old woman died after being blown over: “The decedent was outside her residence smoking a cigarette when a gust of wind from the hurricane blew her off the porch and she subsequently struck her head on a concrete step.”</p> <p>Most victims drowned, underlining that the storm surge was the deadliest part of the hurricane.</p> <p>Not included in the report are five deaths in North Carolina, one in Virginia and three in Cuba, when Ian swept across the west of the island two days before gaining power in the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico and slamming into the south-western Florida coast.</p> <p>Authorities in Florida have been criticized for issuing evacuation orders too late, although Ron DeSantis, the Republican governor, and county officials have defended their actions.</p>

DeSantis has claimed, falsely, that Lee county was not yet included in the National Hurricane Center's (NHC) forecast track 72 hours before the storm hit, and that it was predicted instead to strike Tampa, about 120 miles north.

The NHC "cone of uncertainty" included parts of Lee county during that time frame, including Cayo Costa, where Ian made first landfall.

More than 215,000 customers remained without power across Florida, authorities said, while thousands of workers sought to repair grids.

On Pine Island, piles of rubble and debris have replaced many homes, power lines and wooden poles littering yards and roadways.

In a visit to the worst-hit areas on Thursday, Joe Biden promised the resources of the federal government would be available "as long as it takes". Some estimates have calculated the damage at \$55bn.

The president met local residents, small business owners and relief workers in Fort Myers, praising the cooperation between state and federal agencies.

Noting that the recovery could take months or years, he said: "The only thing I can assure you is that the federal government will be here until it's finished. After the television cameras have moved on, we're still going to be here with you."

DeSantis, seen as a potential rival to Biden in the 2024 presidential election, also struck a conciliatory tone.

"We are cutting through the red tape and that's from local government, state government, all the way up to the president. We appreciate the team effort," he said.

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HEADLINE	10/06 US: Russia mercenaries exploiting Africa
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/06/russian-mercenaries-exploiting-africa-to-fund-war-in-ukraine
GIST	<p>The United States has accused Russian mercenaries of exploiting natural resources in Central African Republic, Mali, Sudan and elsewhere to help fund Moscow's war in Ukraine, a charge Russia rejected as "anti-Russian rage".</p> <p>The US ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said the Wagner Group of mercenaries are exploiting natural resources and "these ill-gotten gains are used to fund Moscow's war machine in Africa, the Middle East and Ukraine".</p> <p>"Make no mistake: people across Africa are paying a heavy price for the Wagner Group's exploitative practices and human rights violations," Thomas-Greenfield told a UN security council meeting on the financing of armed groups through illicit trafficking of natural resources in Africa.</p> <p>Wagner, staffed by veterans of the Russian armed forces, has fought in Libya, Syria, Central African Republic, Mali and other countries. It was founded in 2014 after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula and started supporting pro-Russia separatists in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region.</p> <p>The Russian ambassador to the UN, Vassily Nebenzia, said he regretted that Thomas-Greenfield raised the issue of "Russian support to African partners".</p> <p>"This exposes their real plans and aims – what they really need from African countries," said Nebenzia, without elaborating.</p>

	<p>Russia's February invasion of Ukraine came at a time of heightened rivalry between the west, China and Russia over Africa's natural resources, trade and security ties. Some states worry about being squeezed in the middle of an intense geopolitical rivalry.</p> <p>Russia has been trying to chip away at its international isolation after nearly three-quarters of the General Assembly voted to reprimand Moscow and demand it withdraw its troops within a week of its 24 February invasion of neighbouring Ukraine.</p> <p>Next week, the 193-member General Assembly will vote on whether to condemn Moscow's annexation of four partly occupied regions in Ukraine after staging what it called referendums.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Ukraine seeks Europe security guarantees
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/06/zelenskiy-asks-european-leaders-prague-security-guarantees
GIST	<p>Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has appealed to European leaders across the continent for security guarantees in support of his bid to join Nato, as he described Russia as "the most anti-European state in the world".</p> <p>Addressing leaders attending the first meeting of the European Political Community, a gathering that brought together almost every nation on the continent except Russia and Belarus, Zelenskiy urged them to support Ukraine in their own self-interest.</p> <p>Most states would not be able to wage such an intense war, so the conflict must be won in Ukraine, he told the leaders via video link. "So that Russian tanks do not advance on Warsaw or again on Prague. So that Russian artillery does not fire at the Baltic states. So that Russian missiles do not hit the territory of Finland or any other country."</p> <p>A senior EU official said leaders listened with "a focused sense of gravity, as always when Zelenskiy speaks".</p> <p>Zelenskiy announced Ukraine was applying to join Nato last week, hours after Russia said it was annexing four Ukrainian provinces.</p> <p>Leaders from 44 countries, from Iceland to Azerbaijan, were invited to attend the gathering in Prague castle, a sprawling site of palaces and churches that was once the seat of the kings of Bohemia. Only Denmark's prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, who called snap elections on Tuesday, was absent, as she had to attend the opening session of the Danish parliament.</p> <p>As countries face soaring energy prices and economic headwinds, leaders arriving on the red carpet under cloudy skies declared the meeting was a sign of unity in support of Ukraine against Russia.</p> <p>France's president, Emmanuel Macron, who proposed the concept, said it was "an important moment for Europe" that sent a message of unity. He hoped it would bring "strategic familiarity" and allow leaders to develop "the same reading of the situation".</p> <p>Speaking after the meeting, he said: "We have shown the unity of 44 European countries, which have clearly said, all 44, that we condemn the Russian aggression and that we support Ukraine. That carries a lot of weight."</p> <p>Leaders have billed the forum as a chance to make progress on energy infrastructure projects and curbing the number of migrants seeking to reach Europe. But no precise outcomes were expected; nor was there a summit communique outlining agreed goals from the disparate group of countries, ranging from Scandinavian social democracies to the autocratic regime of Azerbaijan.</p>

Opening the meeting in the glittering, chandelier-laden Spanish hall, the Czech prime minister, Petr Fiala, evoked his country's history as a former member of the Soviet bloc. "One of the lowest points in our history was August 1968 when Moscow sent tanks to my country to destroy our efforts for more freedom, known as the Prague spring. This sums up our experience with the policy of Moscow."

He promised the fledgling EPC was not going to be "another European organisation", nor replace "existing formats of cooperation – we have plenty of them already".

That view chimes with the approach of the British prime minister, Liz Truss, whose decision to go to Prague boosted hopes of a rapprochement with the EU after years of bitter arguments about the Brexit divorce. Writing in the Times, Truss said she welcomed "the opportunity to work with leaders from across the continent in this new forum" but warned: "This must not cut across the G7 and Nato, and it must not be a talking shop."

She later joined the group in a "family photo" under the gothic vaults of Vladislav Hall, where she was in the back row. Protocol dictates that presidents take the places at the front.

Speaking after the meeting, the Czech host, Fiala, confirmed that Moldova would host the next EPC summit, followed by Spain and the UK. Leaders intend to meet every six months, with the host city switching between EU and non-EU countries.

Belgium's prime minister, Alexander De Croo, said: "The whole European continent is here, except two countries: Belarus and Russia. So it shows how isolated those two countries are."

While the EPC was initially intended to unite Europe's democracies, many would challenge that label when applied to attenders, such as Turkey and Azerbaijan, both rated as "not free" by the NGO Freedom House. EU member state Hungary was recently declared "a hybrid regime of electoral autocracy" by the European parliament.

Latvia's prime minister, Krišjānis Kariņš, conceded that "the internal vivacity ... of democracy varies across Europe", adding he did not want to whitewash the issue. Speaking to the Guardian, he said all participating countries could be described as nation states, while Russia viewed itself as an empire.

"The conversation is made difficult by conflicts and very real conflict within other parts of Europe as well, but that does not mean all of us cannot actively condemn Russia's aggression an outright war and what appears to be genocide."

The EU has organised the first meeting, but officials have tried to take a step back to avoid the impression of creating an anteroom to EU membership.

One EU official suggested the participation of former Soviet countries Azerbaijan and Armenia – whose troops continue to fight over their frontier – showed the added value of the meeting, saying these countries were "sometimes considered as Moscow's back yard" so their participation was "of geopolitical importance".

In a significant first, Turkey's leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, met Armenia's prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, a breakthrough for two countries that do not have diplomatic relations. The two leaders had never met; Pashinyan was elected in 2018. Azerbaijan's president, Ilham Aliyev, was also present at what appeared to be an informal gathering of the three leaders, according to Associated Press.

The EU official also said there would be a request to non-EU partners to align on sanctions against Russia, although other sources downplayed the likelihood of pressure being exerted at the summit. Neither Turkey, which has sought to be a mediator in the Russia-Ukraine war, nor Serbia, a candidate to join the EU with historical ties to Moscow, has signed up to EU sanctions.

HEADLINE	10/06 Iran student protests pose govt. challenge
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-student-protests-pose-challenge-to-raisi-government-11665089188?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>Protests in Iran have spread to universities and high schools as the new academic year begins, infusing fresh energy into a weekslong, nationwide movement demanding more rights and prompting a brutal crackdown from authorities.</p> <p>The involvement of young students seeking more liberties adds a new dimension to the rights movement that erupted in Iran after the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini on Sept. 16 in police custody for allegedly violating Iran's strict Islamic dress code. Protesters initially called for more freedom for women, but those demands have since morphed into broader calls to overthrow the Islamic Republic, posing one of the toughest challenges yet to the country's ultraconservative clerical leadership.</p> <p>In videos posted recently on social media, schoolgirls were seen removing their obligatory headscarves, or hijabs, in a display of defiance against the Islamic Republic's strict dress code.</p> <p>Many universities moved classes online in an attempt to contain the protests, but the demonstrations have continued. A violent crackdown earlier this week at one of Iran's premier educational institutes, Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, has become a rallying call on social media for many students across the country.</p> <p>"Right now, schools and universities are the biggest challenge for the regime," said Saeid Golkar, an authority on Iran's politics who teaches at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. "At that age, you don't fear."</p> <p>At Sharif on Sunday, members of a paramilitary force and plainclothes police officers on motorcycles surrounded the campus and began shooting pellets, paintballs and rubber bullets at the protesters, according to some students who were there.</p> <p>The paintball markings were later used to identify and arrest some of the protesters, the students said. Those trying to leave the campus were beaten up with batons, they added, leaving some badly injured. Many were arrested.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the U.S. Treasury Department on Thursday levied fresh sanctions against seven senior Iranian government and security officials the Biden administration said bear responsibility for the violent crackdown against the protest movement.</p> <p>The officials are already sanctioned under other authorities, but the targeting of the ministers of the interior and communications, the head of Iran's cyber police and several other security officials provides Washington another opportunity to publicly censure the Iranian government for a bout of repression that has incurred widespread international condemnation.</p> <p>The action falls short of calls by U.S. lawmakers for measures that would incur more economic pain for the country, but comes as the administration is struggling to secure a nuclear deal with Tehran.</p> <p>On Thursday, facing criticism at home and abroad for the crackdown, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi sought to deflect the blame, resorting to a familiar regime tactic of accusing the U.S. and other adversaries of fomenting the unrest.</p> <p>"America...and other enemies of the country tried to pursue their anti-Iranian and anti-revolutionary goals within Sharif University," Mr. Raisi said during a meeting with the university's officials to discuss the incident, according to the state news agency, IRNA.</p> <p>At the same time, the president appeared to strike a conciliatory tone with the students, calling them noble. He said universities remain the best environment for the discussion of important issues of society, but students shouldn't allow outsiders to influence them.</p>

	<p>The crackdown on protesters in Sharif University has left many students badly injured, according to some students. Several Sharif students were taken to Evin Prison, according to protesters, a detention center known to house political prisoners.</p> <p>“Initially, the protests were over the mandatory hijab and generally the neglect of women’s rights,” said one of the students, who was among the protesters. He and other students said those calls quickly changed to broader antiregime protests.</p> <p>The Sharif protests triggered a tense standoff with the members of the paramilitary group, called Basij, which is supposed to uphold the Islamic Republic’s political and social system and has representatives in most public institutions.</p> <p>Tensions were growing for days in Sharif before the clashes on Sunday between protesters and Basij members, according to some students.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 SEA expects rush of travelers this autumn
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3666035/sea-tac-airport-busy-autumn/
GIST	<p>If you have a flight out of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in the next several weeks and are hoping for an empty terminal, think again. The leaves may be on the ground, and the kids may be back in school, but the airport is still bustling.</p> <p>Usually, the end of summer would bring a drop-off in Washington residents jetting away on vacation. But that is not the story in 2022.</p> <p>Port of Seattle spokesman Perry Cooper said the airport gets projections from airlines for passenger numbers a couple of weeks in advance of flights, and so far, there does not seem to be any remarkable dip in travel in October.</p> <p>“We are seeing higher numbers here in the fall than we have in the past. It’s not quite the numbers that we’ve seen up into the summer, where we would get 60,000 passengers per day outbound; probably our high points over the next couple of weeks are in the 55,000-passenger range,” Cooper said. “That’s still pretty high. For this time of year [typically], we would probably be down near the higher 40s, and the super slowest days, even lower than that.”</p> <p>He believes this has to do with COVID-19, noting that people are now eager to get back into the sky after years of staying home.</p> <p>“It is kind of that ‘revenge travel’ term that we’ve heard over the last year,” he said. “People just want to get out of the house we’ve been in so long throughout the pandemic.”</p> <p>That goes for international travel, as well.</p> <p>“Our European travel is above 100% of where it was in pre-pandemic 2019 levels,” Cooper said. “So we’re seeing people getting out in different places, wherever they can — Mexico, the Caribbean.”</p> <p>Sea-Tac does not expect another day as busy as the one a couple of weeks ago when security lines stretched to the parking garage, and passengers told KIRO Newsradio they waited up to three hours. However, it is very possible that travel may not let up from now through the holiday season.</p> <p>There are several reasons why the increase in travel can be overwhelming for Sea-Tac. Like so many other businesses, the airport is suffering from staffing shortages. Additionally, Cooper said the airport is smaller, space-wise, than other American airports serving the same number of passengers. There are several construction projects in the works that are building up, rather than out, to accommodate more people.</p>

	<p>To deal with the extra people this fall, the airport is trying to have more staff scheduled during its busiest times.</p> <p>“We’re working to ensure we’ve got as much staff as we can in those peak periods,” Cooper said. “Specifically, between 4:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. is always the busiest time because that’s about 70% to 80% of our traffic outbound.”</p> <p>Airport staff can help direct people to security lines, but they cannot screen passengers. Like the airport, TSA is also experiencing staffing shortages. Extra TSA agents who would normally be based elsewhere were brought in during the summer to accommodate the larger passenger loads, but this program ended in early September.</p> <p>TSA did not respond to KIRO Newsradio’s requests for information about how the agency would be dealing with the busier-than-usual autumn at Sea-Tac.</p> <p>If you have a flight in the coming weeks, get to the airport early. Arrive two hours before a domestic flight and three hours before an international one. Punctuality is essential if you are flying out during those peak morning hours.</p> <p>If you do not have TSA PreCheck, you can still cut down on your time in the security line without spending a dime. The airport is offering the free SEA Spot Saver service, which lets passengers reserve a security screening time. Appointments are limited; you can make one up to 72 hours before your flight.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Indonesia police actions led to deadly crush
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/06/indonesia-kanjuruhan-stadium-stampede-police/
GIST	<p>A massive barrage of tear gas munitions fired by Indonesian police at soccer fans prompted the fatal crush in Malang last weekend that left at least 130 people dead, a Washington Post investigation shows.</p> <p>Are you on Telegram? Subscribe to our channel for the latest updates on Russia’s war in Ukraine. The firing of at least 40 munitions at the crowd within a 10-minute span, in violation of national protocols and international security guidelines for soccer matches, sent fans streaming for the exits. The munitions included tear gas, flash bangs and flares.</p> <p>Many fans were either trampled to death or fatally crushed against walls and metal gates because some of the exits were closed, the investigation found. The Indonesian National Police did not respond to repeated requests for comment.</p> <p>The review — based on an examination of more than 100 videos and photographs, interviews with 11 witnesses and analyses by crowd control experts and civil rights advocates — reveals how the police’s use of tear gas in response to several hundred fans entering the field caused a huge surge at the southern end of Kanjuruhan stadium, where survivors say the bulk of the deaths occurred. Several doors were locked, witnesses said, further fueling the panic. This was confirmed by the country’s president, who has ordered a safety review of stadiums in the country.</p> <p>As of Thursday, officials said 131 people had died, including 40 children. Human rights groups, including Amnesty International Indonesia, say the toll in Indonesia’s Malang regency could be as high as 200.</p> <p>The Indonesian government has called for an inquiry into the incident, which is among the deadliest crowd disasters ever recorded. Provincial police officials have said their use of tear gas was warranted because “there was anarchy,” but crowd control experts who reviewed a video reconstruction provided by The Post disagreed.</p>

The chief of Malang's police department and nine other officers were dismissed Wednesday for their role in the disaster. Another 18 officers are also under investigation.

The police response violated the Football Association of Indonesia's protocols, which state that all matches have to abide by security provisions laid out by FIFA, soccer's global governing body. FIFA bars "crowd control gas" from being used inside stadiums and mandates that exit gates and emergency exits remain unobstructed at all times.

Videos provided exclusively to The Post show that police, shortly after the game ended, fired at least 40 nonlethal munitions at fans either on the field or in the stands. Much of the gas drifted toward seating sections, or "tribunes," 11, 12 and 13.

Police standing in front of section 13 fired tear gas onto the field and upward into the stands, prompting thousands of spectators to evacuate their seats, videos show. Bottlenecks formed at the exits, which were only wide enough for one or two people to pass at a time, eyewitnesses said.

Clifford Stott, a professor at Keele University in Britain who studies the policing of sports fans, reviewed videos provided by The Post and said that what happened at Kanjuruhan was a direct result of police action combined with poor stadium management. Along with another crowd control expert and four civil rights advocates, he said the police use of tear gas was disproportionate.

"To fire tear gas into the stands when the gates are locked is likely to lead to nothing else other than the massive amounts of fatalities," he said. "And that's exactly what's occurred."

At 9:39 p.m. on Saturday, the referee blew the final whistle in the game between Arema FC and Persebaya Surabaya, rival teams in East Java province. The vast majority of spectators were fans of Arema FC, the home team, which had lost to Persebaya for the first time in 23 years. As Arema players began to leave the field, a few supporters hopped the barrier to approach them.

By about 9:45 p.m., several hundred spectators were on the field.

Two minutes after the players were escorted off the field, security personnel guarding the exit began pushing back the crowd, scattering the fans. Tensions rapidly escalated.

Officers in military fatigues started to push fans back toward sections 11, 12 and 13, kicking them and striking them with batons and riot shields. Some spectators fell as they tried to clamber over metal barriers and back into the stands.

At about 9:50 p.m., police escalated to tear gas and flash bangs. Smoke caused by flares and gas drifted toward the southern seating sections, videos show.

Spectators in sections 9 and 10 told The Post they coughed and their eyes started tearing almost immediately. In sections 12 and 13, rows of people were almost entirely blanketed by chemicals. Cries from tribune 13 echoed through the stands, witnesses said.

"The gas burned," recalled Elmiati, 33. She was seated near the exit in section 13 with her husband and 3-year-old son but was separated from them during the chaos. Both of them died of injuries later that night.

"They kept firing into the tribunes ... but the people there had no idea what was happening," said Elmiati, who like many Indonesians only goes by one name. "We weren't the ones who had run onto the field."

As gas and smoke wafted through sections 12 and 13, many spectators jumped back onto the field to escape it, according to 10 witnesses interviewed by The Post. Others who tried to leave found the exits blocked, prompting them to jump onto the field, too, in search of another way out.

Officers then fired more tear gas toward the southern end of the stadium, some directly into the stands.

“Everyone panicked. The supporters panicked because they wanted to get out, and the security forces also panicked,” said Ari Bowo Sucipto, a local photographer on the scene. “Both sides panicked ... and it became a cycle.”

Ranto Sibarani, a human rights lawyer in Medan, Indonesia, who reviewed video footage, said authorities appeared to be firing nonlethal munitions “sporadically” and without a clear strategy. There were local, national and military forces on the pitch, and it wasn’t clear who was in charge. The result was a massive, uncoordinated use of chemicals, Sibarani said.

Wiryadi Adiwena, deputy director for Amnesty International Indonesia, said police actions reflected a systemic problem in Indonesian law enforcement. [An Amnesty report](#) in 2020 documented 43 incidents of police violence during protests, including videos that show officers using tear gas in narrow spaces and firing water cannons at close range.

“This is not just the responsibility of the people who are swinging the batons,” he said, “but also of the people who have allowed a procedure like this to be implemented time and time again.”

Mohammed Iqbal, a 17-year-old who was seated close to Elmiati in section 13, said he ran when tear gas hit. He headed toward the exit at section 8, but it appeared closed. He returned to section 13, where he slipped and fell down stairs leading to the exit. Curled up on the ground, he suffered injuries to his arms, legs and stomach.

“I was ready to die there,” said Iqbal, a food vendor. “I thought for certain I’d never make it out.”

Dedi Prasetyo, spokesman for the national police force, said managing the exits was the responsibility of the game organizers, not the police.

The Football Association of Indonesia acknowledged Tuesday that some of the exits were closed when police began firing tear gas, but it did not say how many. Stadium workers had not had time to reopen all the gates, said Erwin Tobing, a representative of the association.

But crowd control experts note that by the time police started firing tear gas, the game had been over for about 11 minutes.

Police investigators, citing their review of surveillance video of six of the 14 gates in the stadium, said Tuesday that the doors were open but too narrow to handle the mass of people exiting.

Photos and videos show some doors around the stadium were bent and warped after the incident.

“I’ve seen video footage of heavy steel gates that have been bent by the pressure. Well, they can only have been bent by the pressure if they were locked shut,” Stott said. The exits that were open were obstructed in some places by people who had fainted or tripped, witnesses said.

Bhaitul Rohman, 27, said he left through the exit in section 3 before going to section 4 to help others who were stuck.

“I saw about 20 people just piled up on top of one another,” he said. “I felt a hand holding my leg and saw a man who couldn’t get out from under the pile of bodies.”

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HEADLINE	10/06 Biden's Saudi trip faces new scrutiny
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/06/biden-saudi-oil-trip-mbs/
GIST	Saudi Arabia’s decision to join its partners in announcing a cut to oil production on Wednesday is setting off fresh recriminations over President Biden’s trip to the kingdom this summer, which officials hoped would improve the Saudi relationship across a range of issues, including the global supply of oil.

Some officials in the Biden administration bristled in the aftermath of the cut declared by the OPEC Plus cartel, viewing it as a direct affront to the president that threatens to hurt Democrats' standing in the 2022 midterm elections because it will drive gas prices up.

U.S. officials now are left grappling with how to respond to a potential price spike that could help finance Russia's war in Ukraine, compound the major challenges facing the American and European economies, and give Republicans a powerful new argument on inflation.

One White House official called the OPEC decision a "disaster." Another said administration officials viewed the move as a deliberate provocation designed to boost Republicans' chances so close to the elections. Other officials said they did not interpret malice in the Saudi decision, but they viewed it as a shortsighted effort to maximize oil profits despite the economic and geopolitical consequences.

Biden said Thursday that the cartel's decision didn't undermine the point of his visit in July, but that it was still disappointing. "The trip was not essentially for oil. The trip was about the Middle East and about Israel and rationalization of positions," he told reporters. "But it is a disappointment."

National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said Biden's advisers had all agreed to the trip over the summer. "There was consensus across the President's senior national security team on the importance of this trip to advance U.S. national security interests," she said in a statement.

But that didn't assuage critics of the Saudi government.

"They're spitting in the face of Joe Biden," said Dean Baker, a White House ally and an economist at the Center for Economic and Policy Research, a left-leaning think tank. "Whoever thought this trip was a good idea has some explaining to do."

Even before Biden flew to the Middle East in July and fist-bumped Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the country's de facto leader, White House aides knew the trip would bring criticism. Biden had declared that human rights would be at the "center" of his foreign policy, and he said he would make the oil-rich monarchy a "pariah." But the president also remained keenly aware of the burden soaring gas prices were having on middle-class Americans.

Biden's top aides on Middle East and energy, Brett McGurk and Amos Hochstein, pushed for the trip as a means to strengthen the relationship and improve Washington's ability to project influence in the Middle East at a time when oil-rich states were exploring ties with Moscow and Beijing, according to U.S. officials and congressional aides, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss U.S. policy.

Administration officials had long been sharply divided on how to treat the oil-rich autocracy. Those favoring a cold-shoulder approach pointed to Saudi Arabia's unpopular war in Yemen, Riyadh's poor human rights record and the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi as reasons to overhaul the relationship.

Many officials in senior roles at the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development also said they felt they had room to maneuver, given the United States' growth as an oil-producing energy superpower. Creating a clean break with former president Donald Trump's remarkably close rapport with the kingdom also had broad appeal among Biden's political appointees.

Some U.S. officials said concerns about the Saudi trip were shared by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, even though the top diplomat ultimately supported and participated in the visit.

"Secretary Blinken was fully supportive of the Administration's engagement with our regional partners on the multiplicity of interests we have," said State Department spokesperson Ned Price.

McGurk and Hochstein's support for the trip began to gain favor in the White House in September 2021, as the price of oil rose and resentment in the Gulf led the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia to rebuff repeated U.S. requests to increase oil output, according to senior officials and congressional aides familiar with the matter. The decisive moment for the push to draw closer to the Saudis came when Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, sending energy prices soaring and turning high gas costs, already a domestic political liability for Biden, into a geopolitical setback.

Some Democrats, already skeptical of the U.S.-Saudi relationship, seized on the OPEC Plus decision to criticize the trip.

"I think it's time for a wholesale reevaluation of the U.S. alliance with Saudi Arabia," Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), chairman of the Senate foreign relations subcommittee on the Middle East, told CNBC.

One Democratic congressional aide close to administration officials, who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss U.S. policy, said: "This trip was hotly debated inside the administration, and I don't know how one could argue now that it wasn't a mistake."

White House officials have strongly denied that the goal of the trip was to spur Saudi oil production. U.S. officials who favor the U.S.-Saudi relationship said critics misunderstood the objectives of the visit and overestimated Riyadh's ability to reduce gas prices for average Americans. They also emphasized that Saudi Arabia is pumping 11.1 million barrels per day, a rate the country hadn't sustained in the past.

But the OPEC Plus decision means that increased production will come to an end sooner than U.S. officials hoped.

Energy analysts also say Saudi Arabia faced financial pressures to cut production, since the price of oil fell close to \$80 per barrel for about two weeks last month. U.S. officials argued to Saudi counterparts that the risks of letting the price fall below that point were minimal, but the Saudis would not budge, according to people familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive conversations. Saudi officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The trip's defenders also said it was justifiable because of the other objectives of the visit, which included bolstering a truce in the long-grinding civil war in Yemen. Aid groups say the truce, which was first agreed to in April, reduced violence as much as 60 percent. However, the warring sides recently failed to extend the six-month cease-fire, and U.S. officials now fear a "return to war," Tim Lenderking, the U.S. special envoy for Yemen, told reporters Wednesday.

On the trip, U.S. officials also worked to open Saudi airspace to flights serving Israel, and they pressed the United Arab Emirates to stop the construction of a Chinese military base — an effort that is ongoing.

Even the staunchest defenders of Saudi Arabia concede that the timing of the production cut was a major blow to the United States, and that it came despite the strenuous objections of U.S. diplomats who pressed their counterparts through the early hours of Wednesday morning to delay the decision.

Biden officials across a wide section of the administration — including the Energy Department, State Department and the National Economic Council — raced Thursday to draw up policy responses to the announcement. No obvious solutions are apparent. Energy officials have begun looking at a potential ban on American oil exports.

White House officials have also been exploring the possibility of easing sanctions on Venezuela to supplement some of the oil lost by OPEC's cut to production. That is a long shot, however: The United States believes Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro needs to engage with the Venezuelan opposition before any sanctions are lifted.

	Sullivan and National Economic Council Director Brian Deese said in a statement Wednesday that they will consult with Congress on additional mechanisms “to reduce OPEC’s control over energy prices” — suggesting that the U.S. policymakers could be interested in repealing a long-standing exemption to federal antitrust law that allows the consortium to effectively coordinate on prices. That measure, however, would require congressional approval and faces industry resistance, strongly reducing its likelihood of being implemented.
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HEADLINE	10/07 Ukraine police recover 534 civilian bodies
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/07/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#ukraine-civilian-bodies
GIST	<p>KHARKIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian police have recovered 534 bodies of civilians in territory recaptured by the Ukrainian Army since early September, Serhii Bolvinov, head of the investigative department of the regional police force in Kharkiv, said at a news briefing on Thursday.</p> <p>The bodies included 226 women and 19 children. Most of the civilian bodies recovered — 447 — were found in a mass burial site in Iziium.</p> <p>The police have also discovered 22 locations that they suspect were used as torture chambers in areas of Kharkiv Province that were recently freed from Russian control, he said. Investigators have been gathering documents and other evidence from the sites and witness testimony, including from former detainees.</p> <p>“Russian units set up such places of detention of civilians and prisoners of war in almost all the settlements where they were based,” Mr. Bolvinov said.</p> <p>Ukrainian troops have recaptured nearly 500 towns and villages since Sept. 7 in a sweeping counterattack that has pushed Russian forces out of most of Kharkiv Province after nearly seven months of occupation.</p> <p>“The most common torture techniques were electric shocks and severe beatings with sticks and other objects,” Mr. Bolvinov said. “There are cases of pulling out nails and using gas masks to restrict breathing.”</p> <p>Most of the victims were residents who were detained for violating the nightly curfew or accused of acting as target spotters for Ukrainian artillery attacks.</p> <p>In one instance, Mr. Bolvinov said, a pensioner from Iziium traveled out of the city but then returned for personal reasons. After a Ukrainian artillery strike on Iziium on Aug. 29 the pensioner was detained at his home and taken to the local police station, which Russian troops were using as a military headquarters, Mr. Bolvinov said. The building is one of the locations being investigated as a torture chamber.</p> <p>“People speaking with a Russian accent demanded to know who he was passing the coordinates to,” Mr. Bolvinov said, reading from the witness record. They hit the pensioner with a tube, breaking his arm, and pushed metal spokes from a bicycle wheel under his skin in the area of his shoulder blades. After two hours of torture, the man lost consciousness from the pain, Mr. Bolvinov said.</p> <p>The police were also investigating a case in the village of Pisky-Radkivski, east of Iziium, where a group of about 10 Russian soldiers, including a commander, set up a headquarters in a private house, Mr. Bolvinov said. They seized the home and two cars from a resident, he said.</p> <p>“We have witnesses who heard screams from the basement, pleas for help,” Mr. Bolvinov said. “Sometimes, after the screams, the locals heard bursts of shots, after which the screams stopped.”</p> <p>In the basement of the house, the police found ropes, Ukrainian army jackets, a gas mask, a dildo and a plastic container with dentures and gold teeth. Investigators also found records of testimony by Ukrainian prisoners.</p>

	Mr. Bolvinov said the authorities were investigating whether the teeth were evidence of torture or had been taken from a dentist's practice. The teeth have been sent for DNA analysis, he said.
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HEADLINE	10/07 Escape: 2 Russians in Alaska seek asylum
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/07/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#two-russians-who-braved-miles-of-open-sea-arrive-on-an-alaskan-island-and-request-asylum
GIST	<p>The two Russians braved miles of open sea, traveling on a vessel from Russia to a small isolated island in Alaska with the apparent aim of avoiding being ensnared in President Vladimir V. Putin's mandatory conscription to fight in Ukraine, two U.S. senators said on Thursday.</p> <p>The two escapees appeared to have accomplished their goal, landing on a beach on the northwest tip of St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea this week and requesting asylum in the United States, according to a statement from Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, Republicans of Alaska.</p> <p>Mr. Sullivan said he had contacted the secretary of homeland security, Alejandro Mayorkas, after being informed about the duo, whose escape, he said, underlined the desperation of Russians seeking to flee Mr. Putin's war.</p> <p>"This incident makes two things clear," Mr. Sullivan said in the statement. "First, the Russian people don't want to fight Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine. Second, given Alaska's proximity to Russia, our state has a vital role to play in securing America's national security."</p> <p>The pair sailed to the island from the city of Egvekinot in northeastern Russia, a journey close to 300 miles, Curtis Silook, Gambell's town clerk, told Alaska's News Source, an online news outlet. Phone calls to the clerk's office did not go through on Thursday evening; the Coast Guard said that the island was engulfed in a storm.</p> <p>The two Russians appeared to be part of an exodus of more than 200,000 men who have fled Russia since Sept. 21, when Mr. Putin, faced with major battlefield losses in Ukraine, issued an order to mobilize as many as 300,000 reservists to join the fight. Within four days, the independent Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta reported, an estimated 261,000 military-aged men had left. Tens of thousands more have fled since.</p> <p>Many of the men have ended up in places like Kyrgyzstan, a former Soviet territory, that normally see few refugees but are willing to take them. Others have gone to Georgia, Finland, Turkey or other countries.</p> <p>Even before Mr. Putin's mobilization order, hundreds of thousands of Russians had already left the country, prompted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Marsha Espinosa, a spokeswoman for the Homeland Security Department, said in a statement that, after landing in Alaska on Tuesday, the two Russians had been transported to Anchorage for inspection, and had been screened and vetted and then processed in accordance with U.S. immigration laws. She said the two were now in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.</p> <p>Mr. Sullivan said that, given Alaska's geostrategic position in the shadow of Russia, he and Ms. Murkowski had been pressing officials in Washington "to prioritize capabilities in the Arctic — including infrastructure, Coast Guard assets, ports and strategic defense assets."</p> <p>Ms. Murkowski said they were in touch with federal officials and residents in the island town nearest to where the Russians landed to try and learn more about the identity of the two individuals.</p> <p>She also criticized the federal response to the Russians' arrival, saying that Customs and Border Protection, the federal agency securing American borders, had to dispatch a Coast Guard aircraft from over 750 miles away to arrive on scene.</p>

	“This situation underscores the need for a stronger security posture in America’s Arctic,” she said.
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HEADLINE	10/06 Largest Iranian community outside Iran
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/06/us/iranian-immigrants-california.html
GIST	<p>LOS ANGELES — Next to a small bookstore, where prayer beads and the tricolor Iranian flag hung in the window, a poster announced a nearby candlelight vigil for Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who died last month in Tehran after being detained by the country’s morality police.</p> <p>On the opposite side of Westwood Boulevard, a shopkeeper taped a sign to his door stating “Women, Life, Freedom,” in both English and Farsi. Farther down the street, past Iranian grocers, barbers and clothiers, a protest flier tacked to an ice cream store said in bold, “The time has come.”</p> <p>Now in their third week, demonstrations set off by Amini’s death have spread across the world and throughout the Iranian diaspora, including within California. Thousands gathered over the weekend for rallies in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego and several other cities to show solidarity with the women of Iran.</p> <p>The unrest that has gripped Iran is particularly resonant in the Los Angeles region, which is home to the world’s largest Iranian community outside of Iran. Just south of the U.C.L.A. campus, this stretch of Westwood Boulevard between Wilshire and Pico has been known as Tehrangeles since at least the 1980s.</p> <p>Sepi Shyne, who fled Iran with her family when she was 5, said that moving to the Los Angeles area “felt very much like I was coming home in many ways, in terms of being Iranian American.”</p> <p>“I haven’t been back to Iran, and I can’t go back,” Shyne, now mayor pro tempore for West Hollywood, told me. Los Angeles, she said, “is the closest thing to really being home.”</p> <p>It’s not entirely clear why Southern California became such a hub for Iranians. There are about 400,000 Iranian-born immigrants in the United States, and more than a third of them live in the Los Angeles metropolitan region, according to data from the Migration Policy Institute. If you look at Iranian immigrants globally, roughly one in 10 live in Southern California.</p> <p>“The size of the community in L.A. is kind of unparalleled, where you could theoretically live in L.A. speaking only Persian and get all of your daily needs done,” said Amy Malek, an assistant professor at Oklahoma State University who studies the Iranian diaspora. “It’s just not really true elsewhere.”</p> <p>Sometimes people speculate that Los Angeles was attractive to Iranians because its climate, landscapes or even Tehran-like traffic felt familiar, but there’s not much evidence to back that up, said Kevan Harris, an associate professor of sociology at U.C.L.A.</p> <p>In the late 1940s, Iranian students began coming to the U.S. to seek higher education, particularly engineering degrees. By around 1977, as Iran’s oil economy was booming, Iranians accounted for approximately one in 10 international students in the United States, more than from any other country, said Jeanne Batalova, a senior policy analyst with the Migration Policy Institute.</p> <p>At that time, a small Iranian community had formed in Los Angeles, made up of students as well as people who had been religious minorities in Iran, including Jews, Armenian Christians and Baha’is. Southern California had long been a haven for religious minorities, and U.C.L.A. research suggests that a large share of Iranians who came to Los Angeles County in the early to mid-1970s were religious minorities, Harris told me.</p>

	<p>Then, in 1979, the Iranian revolution erupted. Many Iranian students who were in the U.S. stayed here, and some of their families followed them as a wave of people escaped the country. Immigrants were drawn to places where other Iranians were already living, including Los Angeles.</p> <p>A 1986 Los Angeles Times review of a Persian restaurant provides surprising insight into these immigration trends: “Iranian food is almost always prepared by the women, and the process is often arduous. That is why, despite the longtime presence of Iranian students in America, it wasn’t until the more recent arrival of their mothers that we had authentic Persian restaurants in Los Angeles.”</p> <p>The result was that Los Angeles became a magnet for Iranians, even through later immigration surges in the 1990s and 2000s.</p> <p>Malek, who grew up in Atlanta, recalled that when she first arrived at U.C.L.A. to do her Ph.D. she heard a woman on campus speaking Persian. The language was so rare everywhere else Malek had lived in the U.S. that she was used to introducing herself to whomever was speaking it.</p> <p>She turned around to look at the woman talking. “She looked me up and down, and was like, ‘Mind your own business,’” Malek said, laughing. “It was just so normal for them. That’s really pretty unique to L.A.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Federal judge blocks NY gun law
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/06/nyregion/judge-blocks-ny-gun-law.html
GIST	<p>A federal judge on Thursday blocked large portions of a new New York gun law, jeopardizing a measure that was passed just three months earlier and underscoring the difficulty that states may face in restricting the public carrying of firearms after a major Supreme Court ruling in June.</p> <p>In a 53-page order, the judge, Glenn T. Suddaby of the Northern District, said he would block the state from enforcing several provisions, writing that New York’s attempts to bar guns in a number of places deemed “sensitive” — including museums, theaters, stadiums, Times Square, libraries, places offering services to children and anywhere alcohol is served — appeared impermissible. He based his decision on the June ruling, which struck down a restrictive law that had stood for more than a century.</p> <p>The judge agreed to a three-business-day delay of his order, pending an emergency appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. That panel could take the issue up and grant a significantly longer stay. If it does not, the order will take effect.</p> <p>The ruling dealt a sharp blow to New York, which had sought to provide a model for new gun legislation for the five other states whose laws were invalidated by the Supreme Court’s June ruling — in part by outlining how those “sensitive places,” where the court said it was permissible for states to bar guns, can be defined.</p> <p>But the breadth and severity of Judge Suddaby’s decision illustrated how the justices had redrawn longstanding battle lines in the debate over the Second Amendment, giving a significant advantage to those who seek to carry guns in public and leaving many broad questions to be decided in lower courts.</p> <p>“This opinion is a signal to all the states enacting gun laws that the chances of those laws surviving in court are slim,” said Adam Winkler, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, who specializes in constitutional law and gun policy. “It’s really a signal that courts are prepared to strike down many more gun laws than ever before.”</p> <p>He added: “A case like this, even if it’s not the final word, encourages people across the country to challenge gun laws in search of a similar victory.”</p> <p>New York authorities blasted Judge Suddaby’s ruling. In a statement, Gov. Kathy Hochul said that it was “deeply disappointing that the judge wants to limit my ability to keep New Yorkers safe and to prevent more senseless gun violence.” Mayor Eric Adams of New York City said that the order would</p>

make “it harder for us to protect New Yorkers.” And the state’s attorney general, Letitia James, pledged to appeal.

“Common-sense gun control regulations help save lives,” she said in a statement. “I will not back down from the fight to protect New Yorkers from repeated and baseless attacks on our state’s gun safety measures.”

Erich Pratt, the senior vice president of Gun Owners of America, an organization to which all the plaintiffs belong, said in a statement that Ms. Hochul and Mr. Adams had “lied and misrepresented the Second Amendment to the courts, putting New Yorkers at a great disadvantage in the midst of rising crime.”

If the Second Circuit does allow New York’s gun law to remain in place, a spokesman for Gun Owners of America said that the group would consider an immediate appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Judge Suddaby’s order continued a trying year for New York as it has sought to maintain some of the country’s most restrictive gun regulations. In June, after the Supreme Court, in the case called New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen, struck down the state’s century-old law barring most people from publicly carrying guns, the state passed a new measure in an emergency session in Albany. Lawmakers placed lengthy and elaborate restrictions on the public carry of weapons and included a long list of sensitive locations from which they would be barred entirely.

The law was almost immediately challenged by Ivan Antonyuk, a New Yorker and a member of Gun Owners of America, but was dismissed by Judge Suddaby, who found that Mr. Antonyuk alone did not have legal standing.

However, in that ruling, the judge made his opinion of the arguments themselves clear, in a section he titled “substantial likelihood of success on the merits,” noting that several provisions of the new New York law were most likely impermissible.

Less than a month later, six members of Gun Owners of America, including Mr. Antonyuk, filed a new complaint. Judge Suddaby was ready with his ruling within little more than two weeks. He called the imposition of a “good moral character” test “fatally flawed.” He said of a requirement asking gun permit applicants to list three years’ worth of social media accounts: “No such circumstances exist under which this provision would be valid.”

He was particularly harsh in regard to New York’s list of sensitive locations. For the most part, Judge Suddaby found that many of those restrictions were likely to be impermissible. As mandated by the Supreme Court, his analysis depended primarily on comparing the new restrictions with laws that regulated guns in 18th and 19th centuries; he found few laws that established precedent for barring guns in the places the state put off limits.

“Bruen requires modern-day gun laws responding to modern-day problems to be evaluated on the basis of 18th- or 19th-century regulations, which were passed at the time that modern- day problems would have been unimaginable,” said Eric Ruben, a law professor at Southern Methodist University in Dallas who specializes in gun regulation. “This opinion shows how that approach might lead to outcomes that defy common sense.”

Andrew Willinger, the executive director for the Duke Center for Firearms Law in North Carolina, said that the historical analysis had been relatively limited; for example, he pointed toward Judge Suddaby’s remark that he could not find a historical statute that prohibited guns at “summer camps” — therefore, that restriction was blocked.

Judge Suddaby also took exception to part of the law that restricts the carrying of guns on private property unless the owner explicitly allows them to be carried, saying that there was no historical analogy.

	<p>He did let portions of the law stand, including the 18 hours of training required of permit applicants, and the barring of guns from government buildings, schools and places of worship.</p> <p>But overall, Judge Suddaby, a former prosecutor who was appointed to the court in 2008 by President George W. Bush, said that since the Supreme Court ruling, it had not become easier to obtain a permit to carry guns in New York and that instead, the state had “entrenched itself as a shall-not-issue jurisdiction.” By doing so, he wrote, the state had “further reduced a first-class constitutional right” transforming it “into a mere request.”</p> <p>Mr. Winkler said that he expected the Second Circuit to take up the case and to grant a stay.</p> <p>“Generally, courts tend to grant stays to keep the law as it is at the time of litigation rather than changing the law temporarily, only to find that the original law was permissible,” he said.</p> <p>Representatives for the Democratic majorities in the State Senate and Assembly said that they were reviewing the ruling. The State Senate’s Republican leader, Rob Ortt, called the decision “a victory for the constitutional rights of all New Yorkers.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Russia lashes out in Ukraine: what's next?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/06/world/europe/russia-war-ukraine.html
GIST	<p>Deadly Russian strikes on Ukrainians far behind the front lines and new concerns about the safety of an endangered nuclear power plant highlighted questions about how Vladimir V. Putin’s government, with its troops retreating and dissension escalating at home on Thursday, might lash out if its battlefield losses continue.</p> <p>As Ukraine claimed to retake more towns and villages in the south and east, missiles hit a residential area in the city of Zaporizhzhia, killing at least seven people, with five others missing — the latest in a series of attacks on civilian targets far from the fighting.</p> <p>“Absolute meanness, absolute evil,” President Volodymyr Zelensky said of Thursday’s strikes, speaking by video to a gathering of European leaders.</p> <p>Ukrainian and Western analysts say Russian attacks on civilian targets have grown more indiscriminate, serving little military purpose but reminding people that no part of the country is safe. Less than a week ago, a rocket blast killed at least 30 civilians in Zaporizhzhia at a checkpoint and a bus stop, officials said.</p> <p>A day after the Kremlin announced that it would “nationalize” the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant it has seized in Ukraine, the United Nation’s top atomic energy official said on Thursday that he could not recognize any change of ownership of the plant, which he described as unlawful and destabilizing. And he said a nuclear accident there is “a very, very clear possibility.”</p> <p>Russia may yet prevail in the war that Mr. Putin launched in February — it still has superior firepower and numbers, and control of a significant amount of Ukrainian territory. But its military position in Ukraine has worsened in the past month, and as it has, Mr. Putin has repeatedly escalated the war, in words and deeds, rather than seek a way out.</p> <p>Ukrainian advances have drawn a chorus of outrage from Russian hawks, a remarkable departure in a country where dissent is often treated as a crime. They have accused top officials of incompetence and dishonesty, and have demanded that all of Russia be put on a war footing. One Russian official in an occupied part of Ukraine even suggested on Thursday that the defense minister shoot himself.</p> <p>At the same time, Mr. Putin’s military draft has prompted widespread protests and an exodus of young men from the country, as word filters past Russian censorship that the troops are suffering heavy</p>

casualties, loss of territory, inadequate equipment and terrible morale. Some people fear or oppose the war, and as Mr. Putin has acknowledged, bungling has led to the conscription of many ineligible men. After he announced the draft on Sept. 21, the Kremlin said it would call up 300,000 men, though Russian news outlets have reported that it could be many more.

Under growing pressure, Mr. Putin and his allies have suggested that Russia could use nuclear weapons. That has alarmed officials in Europe. In Washington, [American officials think](#) it is probably a bluff, but a possibility they need to treat seriously.

And in [a bellicose speech](#) last week, Mr. Putin accused the United States of “satanism,” referred to Western leaders as “the enemy” and cast the war as a fight for Russia’s survival — a far cry from his original claims to be protecting ethnic Russians in Ukraine and ridding Ukraine of fascists.

This week, his government completed the formalities to illegally annex four regions of Ukraine that it does not fully control, even as it loses ground there and Mr. Putin’s own spokesman conceded that the boundaries were unclear. The Kremlin has signaled that with the annexation, which would follow staged referendums, it will now claim that Ukrainian military action in that part of Ukraine is an attack on Russian territory, justifying a harsh response.

As they advance, Ukrainian forces have found scenes of destruction and evidence of atrocities. Officials in the Kharkiv region said on Thursday that they had [found 534 bodies of civilians](#) in areas the Russians had taken and then lost, mostly in the city of Izium, and 22 locations they suspected had been used as torture chambers.

On Thursday, the Swedish government said its investigators had confirmed that explosions caused the damage to leaking natural gas pipelines under the Baltic Sea, and said they had gathered evidence, but did not elaborate. Seismologists had reported detecting the detonations on Sept. 26 when the Nord Stream pipelines, which carry natural gas from Russia to Germany, ruptured.

Some European officials have speculated that Russia could have sabotaged its own lines to amplify Europe’s fears of energy shortages, which would be escalation of a different kind.

In Prague, leaders of the 27 European Union nations, meeting on Thursday, formally approved a plan engineered by the Biden administration to cap the price they pay for Russian oil. The action is an attempt to limit Kremlin revenues without an embargo that could cause fuel shortages and higher consumer prices. But a day earlier, Russia and the OPEC cartel of major oil-producing countries agreed to cut their output, in an effort to drive up prices.

When the Russian invasion began more than seven months ago, the Kremlin — and much of the world — expected that Ukraine’s military would be defeated in a lightning assault and its government toppled in a matter of weeks, if not days. But after embarrassing setbacks, Moscow settled on a slower offensive to take what it did not already hold of eastern Ukraine, the area known as Donbas. Despite heavy losses, the Russians made gains into the summer.

But since then, a stunning Ukrainian counteroffensive, aided by Western weapons, has shown the Russian military to be weaker and in greater disarray than it appeared early in the war.

First in the Kharkiv region in the northeast, then the Donetsk region in the east and the Kherson region in the south, and now edging into the easternmost region, Luhansk, Ukraine has retaken what it says is more than 3,000 square miles that had fallen to Russia. Donetsk, Luhansk and Kherson are three of the four regions Russia claims to have annexed.

In the fourth, Zaporizhzhia, lies Europe’s largest nuclear power plant, captured early in the war by Russian troops but still operated by Ukrainian engineers, who are stretched thin and under growing strain.

	<p>“Staff at the plant is operating under almost unbearable circumstances,” Rafael Mariano Grossi, chief of the U.N.’s International Atomic Energy Agency, told reporters in Kyiv on Thursday.</p> <p>The plant — the first of its kind to be in an active war zone — has been damaged repeatedly by shelling, raising the risk of a radiation leak or even a nuclear meltdown. There have been reports of Russian abuse of people in the town where the plant workers live, and Russian forces recently detained the head of the plant for a few days, for reasons that remain unclear. Russian officials have said they will cut the Zaporizhzhia plant off from the Ukrainian power grid, which nuclear experts say could introduce dangerous instability.</p> <p>Speaking a day after the Kremlin said it would take ownership of the plant, Mr. Grossi, whose agency has safety experts stationed at the plant, said, “Of course, the position of the I.A.E.A. is that this facility is a Ukrainian facility.”</p> <p>“This is a matter that has to do with international law,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Gun-related killings, suicides rise in 2021
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/06/health/guns-homicides-suicides-cdc.html
GIST	<p>Homicides and suicides involving guns, which soared in 2020, the first year of the pandemic, continued rising in 2021, reaching the highest rates in three decades, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported on Thursday.</p> <p>Firearms caused 47,286 homicide and suicide deaths in 2021, up from 43,675 in 2020, according to the agency’s research, which is based on provisional data. Rates of gun-related homicide and suicide each rose by 8.3 percent last year.</p> <p>Including unintentional deaths and those related to law enforcement activities, the total number of gun-related deaths in the United States was 48,832 in 2021, according to a separate analysis by the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions.</p> <p>“Everyone is talking about the rise in homicides, but it is largely driven by guns,” said Ari Davis, a policy adviser at the center.</p> <p>Yet gun suicides also drove an overall rise in suicides. “An 8 percent increase in gun suicides over one year is a really large increase,” Mr. Davis said. “It’s very worrisome.”</p> <p>From 2019 to 2021, homicides involving guns increased by 45 percent, while murders that did not involve firearms increased by only 6 percent, according to a preliminary analysis by the Johns Hopkins center.</p> <p>While gun-related suicides increased by 10 percent over the two-year period, suicides by other means decreased by about 8 percent, according to the analysis.</p> <p>Although the C.D.C. research does not address the underlying causes, the increase in firearm deaths parallels a spike in gun purchases during the pandemic, including an increase in first-time owners.</p> <p>Americans went on a gun-buying spree in 2020 that continued into 2021, when in a single week the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported a record 1.2 million background checks.</p> <p>Purchasers often turn to handguns for self-protection, but research has shown that having a firearm in the home dramatically raises the risk of gun death, including both homicides and suicides.</p> <p>Other disruptive aspects of the pandemic may also have contributed to increased violence, said Thomas Simon, the lead author of the C.D.C. research.</p>

“There have been changes and disruptions in services, in education, increased mental stress and isolation, and economic stressors, all related to Covid,” Dr. Simon said.

He added: “We also had concerns in a lot of communities about law enforcement’s use of lethal force, and tension and distrust of law enforcement. So there may have been an impact on the community’s willingness to engage with law enforcement.”

Domestic violence may also have increased during the pandemic, Dr. Simon said.

Gun deaths rose among both men and women in 2021, though men still made up the majority of gun-related victims and suicides. Young adults ages 25 to 44 were the most likely to be killed with a firearm.

And while there were increases in gun homicides among all racial and ethnic groups last year, the rise was primarily concentrated in Black and Hispanic communities. Black people continued to experience the highest gun homicide rates in every age group.

The racial disparity is particularly acute among youngsters and young adults ages 10 to 24.

The firearm homicide rate among Black youngsters and young adults in 2020 was already 20 times higher than among white young people. In 2021, the gap widened as gun homicides among white youngsters decreased slightly, and the rate of firearm homicides among Black young people is now almost 25 times as high.

“This is an example of an unacceptable disparity that has continued to go in the wrong direction,” Dr. Simon said. “It’s possible the stressors associated with the pandemic, which we know hit racial and ethnic communities harder in many areas, could be contributing to these inequities.”

Over all, Black and Hispanic Americans were 13.7 and 2.4 times, respectively, as likely to die in a gun homicide as white people in 2021 — the largest such difference in over a decade, according to the Johns Hopkins analysis.

Suicides involving firearms increased by only 1 percent during the first year of the pandemic but soared in 2021, increasing from 24,292 in 2020 to 26,320 in 2021, the highest one-year increase reported by the C.D.C. and a record high, according to Mr. Davis.

The increase occurred among both men and women, and in most age, racial and ethnic groups.

Gun-related suicides have long been more common among older white men, and in 2021 more than 80 percent of all gun suicides were among white Americans. Those age 45 and older had the highest gun suicide rates.

But Black and Hispanic Americans accounted for the greatest increases in gun suicide rates overall from 2020 to 2021, and Native American and Alaska Native people had the highest gun-related suicide rate among adults under 45 years of age.

Sarah Burd Sharps, senior director of research at Everytown for Gun Safety, called on gun owners to keep firearms locked, unloaded and separate from ammunition and for the implementation of so-called red flag laws that enable the temporary removal of firearms from individuals who are in crisis.

“The pandemic continues to cause huge dislocations in everyone’s lives — economic uncertainty, social upheaval, anxiety about our health, loss of routines affecting everyone — and it’s had a particular toll on young people,” Ms. Sharps said.

She added, “And there have been years of policy decisions where gun laws are being loosened in some states, and continued underinvestment in Black and Latinx communities.”

HEADLINE	10/06 Election workers face an obstacle course
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/06/us/election-workers-midterms-polls.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — In Las Cruces, N.M., self-styled fraud investigators have deluged election officials with open-records demands for office email, images of all 130,000 ballots cast in 2020 and digital records that lay out what votes were cast at every polling place.</p> <p>In Tioga County, Pa., fliers hung on doorknobs urge voters to delay going to polling places until minutes before they close, potentially snarling election-night reporting of results.</p> <p>And in Nye County, Nev., where an election denier is overseeing the next election, officials are recruiting volunteers to hand-count thousands of ballots after the county commission did away with electronic voting machines.</p> <p>With just five weeks left until Election Day on Nov. 8, a drumbeat of lawsuits, harassment, calls to change balloting procedures and demands for reams of election records — driven by people who mistrust or outright reject the idea that elections are fair — are adding to pressures on election officials just as work in advance of the vote is peaking.</p> <p>The problems reflect fears for the November vote and concerns that the demands on voting oversight will further deplete an election infrastructure already pushed to the breaking point — with the 2024 presidential election looming beyond the midterms.</p> <p>“The exhaustion is real for election officials,” Lawrence Norden, the senior director of the elections and government program at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University, said in an interview. He added: “The partisanship and polarization around elections — and election officials themselves — is a strain and a threat to our elections.”</p> <p>Mr. Norden said the pressures on election offices are compounded by a falloff in the federal aid and cybersecurity assistance that poured into the 2020 election. “I’m not so worried for the near term,” he said, “but I am for the long term.”</p> <p>Consider Lycoming County, Pa., home to the city of Williamsport and some 71,000 predominantly Republican voters. Election critics are in court there, demanding a voluminous record of the county’s 2020 vote. Last month the county board of commissioners approved, then scrapped, a referendum on the November ballot over abolishing electronic voting systems in favor of hand-counting ballots. That referendum, too, had been pushed by election skeptics and deniers. Another records request asked for the names and jobs of the county’s 400 poll workers.</p> <p>“How is the November midterm election the third or fourth thing on my radar?” the county’s director of elections and registration, Forrest K. Lehman, asked. “It should be number one.”</p> <p>Perhaps the most pressing problem nationwide is a barrage of requests for election records, from photocopies of ballots to images of absentee ballot envelopes and applications.</p> <p>The county clerk in Winnebago County, Wis., Sue Ertmer, said she fielded some 120 demands for records in only a couple of weeks last month. “When you get those types of requests, it gets a little hard to get a lot of other things done,” she said. “It’s a little overwhelming.”</p> <p>Amy Cohen, the executive director of the National Association of State Election Directors, said the barrage of records requests had hit red and blue counties alike. “Election officials don’t wake up on Election Day or the day before and decide to put on an election,” she said. “Running an election takes weeks of preparation.”</p> <p>The requests come from a variety of sources, but a number of election officials noted that Mike Lindell, the pillow salesman and purveyor of conspiracy theories about the 2020 vote, has encouraged</p>

supporters to submit them. Election deniers offered instructions on filing records requests at a seminar hosted by Mr. Lindell in Springfield, Mo., in August.

In a telephone interview, Mr. Lindell said providing information to the public was an important part of the job of election workers. He added that local supporters had sent him digital recreations of the ballot choices of every voter, commonly called cast vote records, from more than a thousand election jurisdictions. Mr. Lindell said the records support his theory that balloting has been manipulated nationwide, although election experts repeatedly have debunked such claims.

“That’s why we can’t have machines used in future elections,” he said. “Any election in the United States going forward, we need to get rid of them.”

In Doña Ana County, N.M., which includes Las Cruces, the state’s second-largest city, the county elections staff member in charge of processing open records requests quit this year, in part because of the workload, said Amanda López Askin, the county clerk.

“They demand and accuse, and then they leave you with a year’s worth of work,” she said. “In some cases you have to redact information manually, and you have 80,000 pieces of paper” that must be edited to remove protected data.

Some of the records requests seem to have been coordinated by nationwide groups of election deniers. In Pennsylvania, lawsuits in two counties seek to force election officials to turn over cast vote records that state officials say are exempt from disclosure. Both suits are being backed by the [Thomas More Society](#), a Chicago-based conservative law firm that also filed [suits seeking to overturn](#) President Biden’s 2020 election victory.

The demand for documents comes atop a host of other issues that were already plaguing preparations for November.

In a reprise of 2020 pre-election tactics, activist groups promoting the baseless notion of widespread voter fraud are [trying to invalidate](#) tens of thousands of voter registrations, mostly in Democratic areas. Most of the challenges have failed.

Election administrators in a number of states are rushing to adapt to new rules laid down in recent court cases and laws, some of which [would impose harsh penalties](#) for making administrative decisions on balloting matters that long had been seen as matters of discretion. Wisconsin officials, for example, have been barred by a court ruling from contacting would-be voters to correct minor mistakes or omissions in absentee ballots; instead, the ballots must be returned.

Election offices in many jurisdictions are being threatened with lawsuits by election-denial groups, or simply being threatened by angry constituents. Meetings of election boards and county commissions have become forums for campaigns to abandon electronic voting machines or rehash fraud claims from 2020.

In a handful of places, campaigns have succeeded. In sprawling Nye County, Nev., where some 33,000 voters are sprinkled over an area nearly as big as two Vermonts, County Clerk Mark F. Kampf — who has said he believes [Donald J. Trump won](#) in 2020 — is soliciting volunteers [to hand-count ballots](#) in November. County commissioners [voted in March](#) to stop using voting machines made by Dominion Voting Systems, apparently responding to the debunked conspiracy theory that the machines were rigged to favor Mr. Biden in 2020.

Mr. Kampf did not respond to repeated requests for an interview.

In Tioga County, Pa., the only snag in election plans is the door-to-door campaign by an election-denial group and watchdog, Audit the Vote PA, to persuade voters to line up at polling stations as they are about to close.

Toni Shuppe, identified as the group's founder, turned down an interview request, and the county elections director, Penny Whipple, declined to speak on the record. Others said the campaign appears to stem from a conspiracy theory that voting machines are rigged to add bogus Democratic votes throughout the day, and that a last-minute fusillade of votes would thwart that scheme.

The only real effect, however, would be to delay the reporting of election results, said Mr. Lehman of Lycoming County, which abuts Tioga. "To get a lot of people showing up at 7:45 p.m. in the dark, in the cold of November, and then have delays at all your precincts — that would be a recipe for chaos," he said.

The stress, and the added workload posed by the growing nationwide trend toward voting by mail, are taking a toll. In Kentucky, more than one in five of the state's 120 county clerks are not seeking re-election in November, and six have quit outright this year, the state's top election official, Secretary of State Michael Adams, said.

Ms. Ertmer, the Winnebago County clerk, said turnover also has been unusually high in Wisconsin, both among county clerks and municipal clerks who perform most election duties. "I'm going to retire next year," she said. "I would have continued if the atmosphere was different. I love my job, and the people I work with. But enough is enough."

And in Washoe County, Nev., home to Reno, county officials made it official policy to give legal and public relations help to government officials who are harassed or smeared after the registrar of voters, Deanna Spikula, [announced her resignation](#) in June.

All that said, Mr. Adams, Ms. Ertmer and other officials said they planned to be ready when voting begins. Mr. Adams even expressed guarded optimism that the wave of activity by election deniers had crested: "The My Pillow guy did his thing on me a week ago, and I thought I'd get thousands of records requests," he said, referring to Mr. Lindell. "But I got very little."

Some officials, like Anthony W. Perlatti, the director of the Cuyahoga County [Board of Elections](#) in Ohio, said they had learned lessons in 2020 that will help in 2022.

And Nichole Baldwin, the clerk and registrar of voters in tiny White Pine County, Nev., said she was unfazed by the records requests. "They're all asking for the same thing: cast vote records," she said. "I have them on a flash drive, and I'm sending them out as they come in. No big deal."

Indeed, the greatest worry for many was the prospect of the unexpected.

Kaitlyn Bernarde, the city clerk in Wausau, Wis., said she was reviewing her emergency management plan, with guidelines for handling aggressive voters and rules governing the conduct of observers inside polling places.

In April, she said, primary elections in Wausau went swimmingly. She added: "I anticipate it won't be as easy in November."

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HEADLINE	10/06 Tensions soar on Korean peninsula
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/6/tensions-soar-korean-peninsula-pyongtang-tests-mor/
GIST	Hours after its sixth ballistic missile launch in less than two weeks, North Korea flew a dozen warplanes near its border with South Korea on Thursday, prompting Seoul to scramble 30 military fighter jets and sending soaring tensions on the peninsula even higher amid fears that Pyongyang may soon test a nuclear weapon.

Such a test — which would be the first for the isolated North Korean regime since 2017 — would pose a major political and security challenge for the Biden administration, which already has its hands full dealing with the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and rising tensions with China over the future status of Taiwan.

South Korean military officials said they responded to the North Korean provocation with an “overwhelming” show of force that included test-fires of air-to-surface missiles, South Korea's Yonhap News Agency reported. Despite the close encounter, the two sides didn't clash.

The unusual North Korean flights come on the heels of major military drills by U.S. and South Korean troops. The drills appear to have enraged Pyongyang and led to a record number of missile tests over the past several weeks. In the latest test Wednesday night, North Korea launched two missiles from its capital region. Both missiles landed in waters between Japan and the Korean Peninsula.

All told, North Korea has fired more than 40 ballistic and cruise missiles over more than 20 launch events this year.

South Korean military officials blasted the launch and said the continued tests represent a major threat to regional and global stability.

“North Korea's continued ballistic missile launches are a grave provocative action that threatens not only the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula but also the international society,” South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, according to Yonhap.

The latest launch was less than two days after North Korea fired an intermediate-range missile that soared over Japanese territory into the Pacific, sparking evacuation alerts and leading the Japanese government to take the rare step of halting commuter trains. That launch is widely viewed as Pyongyang's most provocative act since 2017, when it tested a nuclear weapon and led to President Trump's vow to unleash “fire and fury” against North Korea if it targeted U.S. interests.

With a pattern of escalation emerging from North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, U.S. diplomatic and military officials condemned the most recent tests. State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said the test is “a very clear violation” of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions limiting Pyongyang's weapons programs.

Officials at the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement that the launches did not pose an immediate threat to American forces or allies, but they warned that the continued tests are examples of “the destabilizing impact” of North Korea's ballistic missile program in the region.

Japan and South Korea, which have a tangled and often testy bilateral relationship, have moved closer in the wake of the North Korean threat.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol jointly condemned the North Korean missile tests in a nearly half-hour telephone call Thursday, South Korean newspapers reported.

“The two leaders strongly condemned North Korea's launch of ballistic missiles as a serious provocation which poses a grave threat to the peace and security of not only the Korean Peninsula but also Northeast Asia and the international community,” deputy presidential spokesperson Lee Jae-myung told reporters in Seoul.

“The leaders also agreed that the North's reckless provocations need to stop and that such acts will entail a hefty price,” Mr. Lee said.

North Korea's tightly controlled state press did not comment on the barrage of missile tests, but Mr. Kim did issue an official congratulations to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who turns 70 on Friday.

“Today Russia is smashing the challenges and threats of the United States and its vassal forces and firmly defending the dignity and fundamental interests of the state,” the statement by Mr. Kim, carried in North Korea’s KCNA news agency, read in part. “It is unthinkable apart from your outstanding leadership and strong will.”

Drills resume

After the test, the U.S. and South Korea resumed military drills as part of their “firm will” to counter Pyongyang’s threats, South Korean military officials said. Those drills included the USS Ronald Reagan, which returned to the waters off South Korea on Wednesday after joint drills with the South Korean and Japanese navies this week.

The presence of the USS Reagan, coupled with the joint U.S.-South Korean drills, has touched a nerve in Pyongyang. The North Korean Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the U.S. aircraft carrier and its strike group pose “a serious threat to the stability of the situation on the Korean Peninsula and in its vicinity.”

Pyongyang also condemned a U.N. Security Council effort to impose new economic sanctions as a result of its recent weapons tests. Those efforts failed because of resistance from permanent Security Council members China and Russia.

There is some speculation in foreign policy circles that Mr. Kim may be demonstrating his country’s ballistic missile capability as a bargaining chip for future diplomatic talks with the U.S. and its allies. Such a calculation seemed to be a key part of Mr. Kim’s strategy in the Trump era.

After the 2017 nuclear test, Mr. Kim and Mr. Trump held three in-person meetings in an unprecedented round of direct diplomatic talks. Those talks ended without a firm agreement to curb North Korean weapons programs in exchange for relief from economic sanctions that have helped strangle the country’s economy.

Some national security observers believe Mr. Kim may be preparing for another nuclear weapons test to demonstrate North Korea’s military capabilities and scare the U.S. and its allies into making concessions in any future negotiations.

Some analysts say the U.S. should take a much different approach. They say the Pentagon, along with U.S. allies in the region, should develop an aggressive policy of intercepting and destroying North Korean missiles after launch.

“A real breakthrough would be achieving deterrence by denial,” retired Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Wallace Gregson wrote in a recent piece for the website 19FortyFive.com.

“We need a comprehensive multidomain surveillance network and ready shooters. Immediate launch detection followed by target-quality data on the missile passed to the most advantageous shooter on the network that fires autonomously or near-autonomously,” said Gen. Gregson, now a senior adviser at The Roosevelt Group. “Large doses of autonomy and artificial intelligence are needed to achieve an effective, near-instant response. The goal is boost phase or early ascent phase intercept. Destroying an enemy missile over enemy territory, especially if it is armed with a weapon of mass destruction, is a very good thing.”

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HEADLINE	10/07 Day 226 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/07/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-226-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The EU has imposed a new round of sanctions on Russia, expanding import and export bans and blacklisting individuals over Moscow’s annexation of four Ukrainian regions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the Ukrainian president, told European heads of state gathered in Prague that Ukraine must win so that Russia does not “advance on Warsaw or again on Prague”. • The Russian opposition activist Vladimir Kara-Murza, who has been imprisoned in Moscow since April, is being investigated for “high treason”, as the authorities step up their case against him for his criticism of the war in Ukraine. • The United States has accused Russian mercenaries of exploiting natural resources in Central African Republic, Mali, Sudan and elsewhere to help fund Moscow’s war in Ukraine, a charge Russia rejected as “anti-Russian rage”. The US ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, has said the Wagner Group of mercenaries are exploiting natural resources and “these ill-gotten gains are used to fund Moscow’s war machine in Africa, the Middle East and Ukraine”. • Ukrainian emergency services said three bodies were pulled from rubble after a Russian rocket strike destroyed a five-storey apartment block in the southern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia. • The Kremlin denied reports that 700,000 Russians had fled the country since Moscow announced a mobilisation drive it said would call up hundreds of thousands to fight in Ukraine. • Two Russians who said they fled their country to avoid compulsory military service have requested asylum in the US after landing in a small boat on a remote Alaska island in the Bering Sea, Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski’s office said Thursday. • The UN nuclear agency chief is en route to Kyiv to discuss creating a security zone around Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, after Vladimir Putin ordered his government to take it over. “On our way to Kyiv for important meetings,” the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) head, Rafael Grossi, wrote on Twitter, saying the need for a protection zone around the site was “more urgent than ever”. Grossi is also expected to visit Moscow in the coming days to discuss the situation at the plant. The IAEA said it had learned of plans to restart one reactor at the plant, where all six reactors have been shut down for weeks. • Ukraine’s forces are pushing their advance in the east and south, forcing Russian troops to retreat under pressure on both fronts. Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Ukraine’s military had made major, rapid advances against Russian forces in the past week, taking back dozens of towns in regions in the south and east that Russia has declared annexed. Military experts say Russia is at its weakest point, partly because of its decision not to mobilise earlier and partly because of massive losses of troops and equipment. • Ukraine has extended its area of control in the Kherson region by six to 12 miles, according to its military’s southern command. Zelenskiy confirmed the recapture of the villages of Novovoskresenske, Novohryhorivka and Petropavlivka, saying the settlements were “liberated from the sham referendum and stabilised”, in an address on Wednesday. • Moscow’s forces have left behind smashed towns once under occupation and, in places, mass burial sites and evidence of torture chambers. In Lyman, which was retaken by Ukrainian forces on Sunday, more than 50 graves were found, some marked with names, others with numbers, the Kyiv-based outlet Hromadske reported on Wednesday.
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HEADLINE	10/06 Olympia clearing large homeless camp
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/city-of-olympia-continues-to-remove-homeless-encampments-rvs-on-ensign-road#
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — The City of Olympia is aiming to finish clearing a massive homeless camp in the next couple weeks. Local groups are rushing to build more shelters in order to move the homeless out from Ensign Road, where people living in the right of way have been known to block an entrance to a busy hospital.</p> <p>“We have had instances where there's been foot traffic in front of ambulances or others trying to get to the hospital timely,” said Darin Goss with Providence St. Peter Hospital.</p> <p>On Wednesday, 13 campers moved from Ensign to the Quince Street Village and six vehicles were moved Thursday, according to a city official. In total, 38 people from the camp have relocated to the microhomes.</p>

“After opening in August, Quince Street Village became the new home for individuals who had been living at the Franklin Street Mitigation Site,” according to a city press release. “The site also has multiple restrooms and showers and enhanced staffing for maintenance and case management, and it will soon have laundry facilities.”

The group Catholic Community Services is in the process of adding 20 more units for a total of 100 to help house more campers from Ensign.

“It’s great because it gives them a tiny home which has a lockable door, window, heat, a place to charge their phone and access to showers which a lot of folks on Ensign didn’t have before,” Olympia’s Homeless Response Coordinator Kim Kondrat explained.

It was just a few weeks ago when KOMO News talked with one anonymous camper who said he didn’t qualify to stay at the village because of his criminal history, and said he was hurt to see this process underway.

“It hurts because I got nowhere else to go and nobody cares,” he stated.

Still, Kondrat said they’re getting positive responses from Quince Street and have a waitlist for more campers to move in. “We have 20 for sure that are going to fill those units,” she stated. “As units are available, we’re offering them a place to stay.”

The city said all vehicles parked on Ensign Road will be removed by mid-October when the city’s temporary RV permits issued for that area are set to expire.

But Kondrat said that deadline is flexible based on when the last of the tiny homes are built. “It’s all dependent on those units. We’re having supply issues,” she added.

Kondrat said she’s hopeful that the camp on Ensign will be cleared in a couple weeks, whether people move to the tiny homes or elsewhere.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Seattle works to protect bicycle lanes
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-bike-lanes-cascade-bicycle-club-vehicles-safety-concerns-cycling#
GIST	<p>SEATTLE, Wash. — The Cascade Bicycle Club is one organization that is seeing problems on the roads with cars, trucks and delivery vans parking in the bike lane. They said they’re seeing this happen more often, especially in areas where bike lanes have no barriers.</p> <p>“It’s often a last second decision someone on a bike has to make and it puts you at risk of colliding with a car that doesn’t see you coming,” said Rachel Schaefer the policy advocacy manager, for Cascade Bicycle Club.</p> <p>Meanwhile, drivers are sharing the challenges they feel is being caused by bike lanes. Erik Stromswold said it’s sometimes hard seeing drivers and seeing exactly where a bike lane starts and ends. “It’s a windy city, the roads kind of go all over the place, it’s hard to tell which way is which and when we do more of one lanes it can be a little difficult,” he said.</p> <p>The Seattle Department of Transportation launched a pilot program this summer to test the effectiveness and durability of different barriers that can be set up around bike lanes. They said it’s something they’ve been working on to ensure the safety of riders. The program specifically looks to compare plastic posts to these different types of barriers.</p>

	<p>Plastic posts are the national industry standard for protected bike lanes, SDOT said, however, they are often broken or knocked down which means the lane is no longer protected and crews have to go out to repair the posts.</p> <p>The program is testing four different alternatives to the plastic posts including concrete guards, concrete parking stops, raised curbs, and the "armadillo" which are lumps shaped like the shelled-mammal and made out of recycled plastic.</p> <p>"We know that concrete is really good at keeping a car out of the bike lane but one of our real goals is also to identify what we can do quickly on a large scale," said Ethan Bergerson, the spokesperson for SDOT.</p> <p>The program includes upgrading plastic posts to concrete along a two-way bike lane on NE 40th St near the north end of the University Bridge in an attempt to better protect cyclists using the bike lane.</p> <p>SDOT said it plans to test the upgraded barriers along the following bike lanes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westbound S Othello St. between 45th Ave S to MLK Jr. Way S • NB 9th Ave (south of Mercer St) • S Columbian Way (between S Snoqualmie St & 16th Ave S • S Dearborn St (between 10th Ave S & 13th Ave S) <p>The agency said 13 bicyclists have been killed on Seattle streets so far in 2022.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Vancouver bans large fossil fuel facilities
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/vancouver-city-council-bans-large-fossil-fuel-facilities
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER, Wash. - The city council in Vancouver, Washington, has approved a permanent ban on new fossil fuel developments after years of temporary moratoriums.</p> <p>While new facilities that distribute, extract, refine or process fossil fuels have been temporarily prohibited by the Vancouver City Council since 2020, the council this week unanimously made the ban permanent, The Columbian reported.</p> <p>"We're concerned fossil fuel facilities pose a risk to the area's health and safety," Chad Eiken, the city's community development director, said in a news release. "There are currently six bulk facilities that are susceptible to liquefaction and hazardous materials could potentially flow into the Columbia River, wetlands and other wildlife habitats in the case of a seismic event. These code changes are intended to reduce this risk and also minimize greenhouse gas emissions."</p> <p>The ordinance is set to take effect in early November.</p> <p>Residents who supported the ordinance filled the Vancouver City Council's public hearing session, many of whom have followed the long process to permanently ban new bulk fossil fuel facilities. In 2018, Gov. Jay Inslee vetoed a plan to develop the nation's largest crude-oil-by-rail terminal at the Port of Vancouver, after nearly five years of debate.</p> <p>The council's ordinance prohibits large new fossil fuel facilities in all zoning districts while facilities with a capacity of 60,000 gallons or less are permitted in industrial zones. Cleaner fuel facilities with a holding capacity up to one million gallons are permitted.</p> <p>It also includes the capacity for existing bulk fossil fuel facilities to expand by 15% if switching to cleaner fuels and upgrading to seismic standards, subject to other requirements.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Florida EVs exploding from water damage
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SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/electric-vehicles-are-exploding-from-water-damage-after-hurricane-ian
GIST	<p>A top Florida state official warned Thursday that firefighters have battled a number of fires caused by electric vehicle (EV) batteries waterlogged from Hurricane Ian.</p> <p>EV batteries that have been waterlogged in the wake of the hurricane are at risk of corrosion, which could lead to unexpected fires, according to Jimmy Patronis, the state's top financial officer and fire marshal.</p> <p>"There's a ton of EVs disabled from Ian. As those batteries corrode, fires start," Patronis tweeted Thursday. "That's a new challenge that our firefighters haven't faced before. At least on this kind of scale."</p> <p>"It takes special training and understanding of EVs to ensure these fires are put out quickly and safely," he continued in a follow-up tweet. "Thanks to [North Collier Fire Rescue] for their hard work."</p> <p>Patronis published a video of firefighters in Naples, Florida, battling a fire started from a Tesla EV's battery. A bystander is overheard in the video saying that the crew had used hundreds of gallons of water attempting to put the fire out.</p> <p>Last week, Hurricane Ian pummeled cities along Florida's west coast including Naples and Fort Myers, making landfall as a Category 4 storm. The hurricane caused more than 100 deaths and over a million residents to lose power.</p> <p>It is unclear how many EVs were impacted or destroyed by the storm.</p> <p>Meanwhile, consumers are increasingly turning to EVs as the Biden administration continues to push a green transition involving zero-emission cars. Between April and June, EVs accounted for 5.6% of new car purchases in the U.S., up slightly from the first three months of 2022, according to Kelley Blue Book.</p> <p>Shortly after taking office, President Biden announced a goal of ensuring that 50% of new car sales would be EVs by 2030.</p> <p>The Biden administration has also taken a number of steps to incentivize Americans to shift to EVs. The president signed the Inflation Reduction Act, a bill that included a provision that awards Americans a tax credit worth \$7,500 per EV purchase, into law in August, and the Department of Transportation has worked to create a federal EV highway charging network.</p> <p>However, critics have blasted the administration for giving a "false impression" about EVs, noting that they are expensive and often unreliable.</p> <p>"[The EV push] is really kind of a con job," Myron Ebell, the director of the Competitive Enterprise Institute's Center for Energy and Environment, told FOX Business in July. "It may be a good deal for some people in some places under some circumstances. But by-and-large right now, it's not a good deal."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/07 Ukraine troops size up the enemy: panic
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/07/world/europe/ukraine-war-fighters.html
GIST	<p>STAVKY, Ukraine — Racing down a road with his men in pursuit of retreating Russian soldiers, a battalion commander came across an abandoned Russian armored vehicle, its engine still running. Inside there was a sniper rifle, rocket propelled grenades, helmets and belongings. The men were gone.</p> <p>"They dropped everything: personal care, helmets," said the commander, who uses the code name Swat. "I think it was a special unit, but they were panicking. It was raining very hard, the road was bad and they drop everything and move."</p>

After months of static fighting and holding the line under withering Russian artillery barrages, Ukrainian soldiers are exulting over their smashing of Russian lines in the northeast three weeks ago, and their recapturing of swaths of territory seized by Russian troops earlier this year. They have almost retaken the whole of Kharkiv Province, as well as territory in each of the four regions that President Vladimir V. Putin claims to have annexed for Russia.

There has been little time for reflection for the Ukrainians as they press their counterattack, focused on keeping the pressure on the retreating Russian army to prevent it from regrouping. Yet after months in the trenches never seeing the faces of the enemy, Ukrainian soldiers and commanders have now engaged the Russians up close and gotten a chance to size up their opponent.

“We have the strength to do this,” Swat said. “Because right now they are in panic, they really are in panic.”

A 58-year-old career soldier, Swat came out of retirement to join the Carpathian Sich, a volunteer battalion, taking over command after his predecessor was killed in battle near Iziun in June.

The battalion has been in the forefront of the fighting, providing flanking support in battles for the strategically important cities of Iziun and Lyman in recent weeks. Four days ago the battalion seized another town further east, helping secure a series of dams and the last settlements of northern Donetsk Province for Ukraine.

The battles have been fast moving, and in the flight from Iziun, produced a great deal of panic on the Russian side. After the capture of Iziun, Swat said, his unit pursued Russian troops for 15 miles down the road in one day. A few more days and Ukrainian troops were at the gates of Lyman, 30 miles south of Iziun; Swat’s group moved east to block any attempt by the Russian army to send reinforcements.

The day Lyman fell, his battalion was attacking another town further east. He asked for security reasons not to disclose the location. His units captured the town in a day, without losses, although nine soldiers were wounded. By the third day they had searched and secured the town and handed it over to another group so they could pull back and recharge.

Then after three weeks of sweeping success and minimal losses, the battalion lost five men in a Russian missile strike and Swat lost a close friend when their car hit a mine. Swat was driving but survived with a concussion.

Tearing up when he talked of his friend in an interview, he asked that a reporter not sugarcoat events of the war with only success stories.

In the battle for Iziun, Swat was preparing his assault when he saw Russian troops suddenly falling back, he said. Ukrainian brigades attacking from the north had taken a main highway, cutting Russian troops’ supply lines, his deputy commander said.

They moved up the timing of their assault and the unit raced in from the south and seized a high point in the city.

Russian armored vehicles were defending, firing machine guns, Swat said. “But people were so excited, no one stopped,” he said. “I was running with a pistol. It’s like a small feeling of victory. It’s unbelievable, you feel it inside, you are happy.”

“We get this hill,” he said, “It was happiness, everyone jumping, shooting, hugging each other.”

The men were firing off their weapons, not listening when he ordered them to cease fire, he said. It was just a minor firefight, given that the Russians were already withdrawing, but the capture of Iziun gave them a huge boost of confidence. It was vindication, he said, for three months of grueling fighting defending positions under Russian artillery and airstrikes that cost them many lives, he said.

As they raced down the road south from Iziun after retreating Russian troops, they captured some enemy soldiers who were sleeping off lunch in a camp in the forest. "They were surprised, seven of them," he said. "No one expected that after lunch we would advance on a forest line."

Some of the Russians, demotivated and scared, and some hungry, were ready to give themselves up, he said. But some kept fighting, believing Russian indoctrination that the Ukrainians would torture and kill them if they allowed themselves to be captured.

On one occasion a Russian soldier pulled the pin of a grenade and killed himself, saying he would never let himself be taken prisoner, Swat said. "We jumped to him but we were too late," he said. "So they are also brave soldiers, and they are afraid."

His battalion has taken more than 30 Russians prisoner in seven months of fighting, 23 of them in the counterattack, he said. "We just get information from them, give them water, food, warm clothes and send them to a higher level," he said.

It has been a steep learning curve for his men, not only in survival but in humanity. A 27-year-old American platoon commander from his battalion, who uses the code name Boris, said one of his most intense moments of the war came when he held a cup of water for a Russian prisoner to drink.

But the fighting units had little time to chase deserters.

In some places local residents told them they were sheltering Russian soldiers who had either fled their posts or been left behind, but Swat said he did not have time to stop. And in the past few days, he said, Ukrainian air reconnaissance tracked Russian units pulling out on foot through the forests using good military tactics — spreading out, moving slowly — but again his units were too tied up to pursue them.

The platoon commander named Boris said their units had carried out several assaults on Iziun from the southwest in the weeks before the counterattack, luring the Russians into reinforcing in that direction. When the full force of the counterattack came from the north, they were not expecting it, he said.

That does not mean there was not resistance.

The Russians were often set up in well dug-in machine gun nests, several Ukrainian commanders and soldiers said. And once Russian troops pull back, there can be heavy bombardment from Russian planes, artillery, and long-range missiles. A powerful missile strike demolished a former Russian command post in the town they seized recently, killing five of his men, he said.

"It was like a cold water shower," Swat said. Referring to the five who died, he said: "For two days I was like, crazy. They were young guys."

For all the recent defeats, he said, he does not think the Russian army is by any means broken. "They will fight, they continue to fight," he said. "It's the Slavic mentality: to fight for your friends. They also have friends who died."

He and his men all voiced concern about the mobilization in Russia, and the new strength it would bring to the Russian side.

The Ukrainian Army is growing stronger, but it is not yet where it needs to be, Swat said. "For all these small victories, it was a very, very tough time," he said of the last seven months of the war. "Slowly we recover, but we are not there yet. And Russia has a lot of power, and it is unlimited in its weapons."

In the village of Stavky, some 10 miles from the front line, the sounds of the Russian bombardment of recently recaptured settlements to the east were loud enough for soldiers and civilians to stop talking and listen.

	<p>But commanders and soldiers seemed to agree that Ukrainian troops should keep pushing before the Russian side could regroup.</p> <p>“We have only one month to do this right now, because right now they are in panic,” Swat said. And winter was closing in. “Now we need to get winter clothes, and we are going to have mud.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Floodgates: blunt criticism of Russia army
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/06/world/europe/putin-russia-army-criticism.html
GIST	<p>Russia’s floundering invasion of Ukraine has produced an extraordinary barrage of criticism from supporters of the war in recent days, directed primarily at the leadership of the Russian military. The outpouring of discontent is creating a new challenge to President Vladimir V. Putin, who, after cracking down on Russia’s liberal opposition, now faces growing dissent in his own camp.</p> <p>The latest salvo came on Thursday when a Russian-installed official in an occupied region of Ukraine belittled the Kremlin’s defense minister, Sergei K. Shoigu, a close associate of Mr. Putin. The official, Kirill Stremousov, said Mr. Shoigu should consider killing himself because of his army’s failures in Ukraine.</p> <p>“Many people are saying that as an officer, the defense minister could simply shoot himself for being the one who let things get to this state,” said Mr. Stremousov, Russia’s “deputy governor” of the Kherson region of southern Ukraine.</p> <p>It was a strikingly blunt and public rebuke, and one that built on growing frustration with the war effort. Last month, it was largely pro-Russian bloggers who were voicing anger over the failings that led to the Russian army’s being routed in northeastern Ukraine. But after Russian troops were forced to retreat in two other sections of the front line in the last week, prominent officials have increasingly joined the chorus.</p> <p>Andrei Kartapolov, the head of the defense committee in Russia’s lower house of Parliament, excoriated the Defense Ministry for covering up the bad news from the front. Another lawmaker said that members of Parliament had written to Russia’s prosecutor general asking for an investigation into the military’s supply problems.</p> <p>“They need to stop lying,” Mr. Kartapolov, who served as a senior military commander before becoming a lawmaker, said on Wednesday. “Our people aren’t stupid, far from it, and they see that they are not being taken seriously. It’s not being considered necessary to tell them even part of the truth, let alone all of it.”</p> <p>Mr. Shoigu, who has vacationed with Mr. Putin in Siberia, has yet to respond to the criticism, and Mr. Putin did not comment on it Thursday. Some of the faultfinding was directed at Gen. Vasily Gerasimov, the head of the armed forces, in addition to Mr. Shoigu.</p> <p>There were indications that the criticism was part of infighting in the Russian ruling elite that was spilling into the open. It comes on the heels of a tirade against the military leadership published over the weekend by Ramzan Kadyrov, the strongman ruler of the southern Russian republic of Chechnya and an ally of Mr. Putin.</p> <p>Mr. Kadyrov’s broadside appeared to open the floodgates — especially after the Kremlin did nothing public to punish him for his breach of wartime discipline. While none of the prominent pro-war critics of the military have attacked Mr. Putin personally, the Kremlin could still lose control of the situation if Russian battlefield losses continue, said Tatiana Stanovaya, a Russian political analyst.</p>

“We’re seeing for the first time a personified attack of one against the other within the regime,” said Ms. Stanovaya, the founder of R.Politik, a political analysis firm. “This is a rather dangerous situation for Putin because no one is in control of it.”

One common thread in the criticism has been that Russia’s military, despite the country’s enormous defense budget, turned out to be unprepared for a real war. Many Russian hawks have been calling on the military for months to escalate its offensive, but are frustrated by its poor execution.

“So what’s the genius idea of the General Staff?” Vladimir Solovyov, a prominent state television host, said on his online talk show on Thursday. “Just explain it to me, dear people who have received all the necessary budget resources for so many years.”

Over Mr. Putin’s 22-year rule, the Kremlin has generally allowed some level of criticism of the government, seeing it as a way for society to let out steam. But after launching his invasion on Feb. 24, Mr. Putin has gone to enormous lengths to silence domestic dissent, forcing journalists and activists into exile and shutting down many of the independent media outlets that remained inside Russia.

What he did not appear to have bargained for is that the war’s loudest supporters would themselves turn into critics of the government. On Telegram — a social network and messaging app widely used by Kremlin critics and supporters alike — war bloggers and public officials have gone from cheerleading Russia’s advances to grumbling ever more loudly about the military’s failings.

Beyond the military’s retreats on the battlefield, pro-war bloggers have been fuming over the failings of the draft announced by Mr. Putin on Sept. 21. The move was supposed to be a way for Mr. Putin to escalate the war quickly; instead it turned into a demonstration of the Russian military’s inability to house and train an influx of new soldiers.

The chaos surrounding the mobilization reached the point that even some of the loudest Kremlin cheerleaders on state TV aired examples of the system running amok.

Margarita Simonyan, the head of the RT television network, and Vladimir Solovyov, a pre-eminent talk show host, tried to outdo each other in pointing out how some of the men who were drafted were in their 50s and 60s, even though the officially announced cutoff age was 35. Others highlighted how a man blind in one eye was drafted.

The military commissar in charge in the region of Novosibirsk, where multiple errors occurred, should be shipped off to the front for such lapses, Mr. Solovyov said. In numerous publicized cases, the summons was withdrawn.

Mr. Putin himself admitted last week that there had been problems with the mobilization, noting that some people called up should not have been, while others with needed skills were turned away.

The questions around mobilization are part of a larger, unusually public debate about how Russia’s military command is executing the war, and how is it possible that Russia could be losing. While the most common excuse is that Russia is fighting the entire NATO alliance, the questions are hitting closer to home.

“There are real questions, you are seeing questions on the news,” said William Alberque, the Berlin-based director of the arms control program at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. “‘Who is leading us? What is going on? Who are these donkeys? We have traitors among us, we need to shoot them.’ That is some of the worm-eating-its-own tail stuff that should be sending alarm bells up the chain.”

It will be a challenge for Mr. Putin to blame the problems on any one person, analysts said, because the president took the lead role in selling the war and kept the generals and others in leadership very much in the background.

“What is he going to do, sacrifice Shoigu or Gerasimov?” said Mr. Alberque. “Saying that his commissars are wrong only works so far in a campaign that has been owned so personally by Putin. You have not seen Gerasimov and Shoigu every day in charge of this.”

Some analysts, however, cautioned against overstating Russia’s struggles and anticipating a collapse of the war effort. The mobilization is just getting started, they noted, and if deploying tens of thousands of new troops at the front, even if they are inexperienced, manages to stem the Ukrainian advances or allows Moscow to go on the offensive again, it is possible that the criticism will ebb.

“We have not seen the end of this, and it is only two weeks after the mobilization,” said Johan Norberg, a Russia analyst at the Swedish Defense Research Agency.

Generally, however, analysts are surprised at both the public level of criticism of the war and how much of it is being lobbed at senior figures.

“There is more blame being tossed around more angrily at higher levels than I would have expected at this stage in the war,” said Mr. Alberque.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Crossing Tacoma Narrows Bridge cheaper
SOURCE	https://www.thenewtribune.com/news/local/community/gateway/g-news/article266868296.html
GIST	<p>New decreased toll rates on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge took effect Oct. 1.</p> <p>The Washington State Transportation Commission passed the decreased rates in late August.</p> <p>WHAT ARE THE NEW RATES?</p> <p>An average two-axle vehicle and motorcycles will pay \$4.50 with a Good to Go! Pass or \$5.50 with cash.</p> <p>A six-axle vehicle will pay \$13.50 with a Good to Go! Pass and \$16.50 with cash.</p> <p>The cost for vehicles with 3-5 axles will be in the middle.</p> <p>HOW DO THESE RATES COMPARE TO OTHER PUGET SOUND TOLLS?</p> <p>Toll rates at the Tacoma Narrows Bridge are standard per axles no matter traffic conditions or time of day. It has the highest toll rate for two-axle vehicles in the Puget Sound area.</p> <p>The four other Puget Sound toll locations consider live traffic conditions or the time of day with rates increasing and decreasing throughout the day.</p> <p>I-405 EXPRESS TOLL LANES</p> <p>I-405 express toll lanes “provide all drivers a faster trip from Lynnwood to Bellevue and back,” according to the WSDOT website. At this location toll rates change “to keep traffic moving.”</p> <p>They change “based on real-time traffic conditions, and range from 75 cents to \$10” for all drivers, the website said. You can check real-time toll rates for your trip through the WSDOT mobile app.</p> <p>SR 167 HIGH OCCUPANCY TOLL (HOT) LANES</p> <p>SR 167 high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes are available for all drivers who need a faster trip from Auburn to Renton and back. At this location toll rates change, according to the WSDOT website.</p> <p>“Toll rates are based on real-time traffic conditions, and range between 50 cents and \$9” for all drivers, the website said. You can check real-time toll rates for your trip through the WSDOT mobile app.</p> <p>STATE ROUTE 520 BRIDGE TOLL</p> <p>On the state Route 520 bridge in Seattle’s Montlake neighborhood toll rates change based on time of day, according to the WSDOT website.</p>

- For two-axle vehicles, weekday toll rates begin 12 a.m. at \$1.25 with a Good to Go! Pass or \$3.25 by mail. By 3 p.m. rates reach \$4.30 with a Good to Go! Pass or \$6.30 by mail. At 6 p.m. rates begin to gradually decrease.
- For two-axle vehicles, weekend toll rates begin 12 a.m. at \$1.25 with a Good to Go! Pass or \$3.25 by mail. By 11 a.m. rates reach \$2.65 with a Good to Go! Pass or \$4.65 by mail. At 6 p.m. rates begin to gradually decrease.
- Vehicles with more than two axles pay a higher, pro-rated toll.

STATE ROUTE 99 TUNNEL TOLL

The state Route 99 Tunnel, also known as the Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement tunnel, is a highway tunnel under downtown Seattle. Tolls change based on time of day and are collected in both directions as you exit the tunnel, according to the WSDOT website.

- Weekday toll rates for two-axle vehicles from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. are \$1.20 with a Good to Go! Pass or \$3.20 by mail. By 7 a.m. rates reach \$1.80 with a Good to Go! Pass or \$3.80 by mail.
- Weekend toll rates for two-axle vehicles are standard at \$1.20 with a Good to Go! Pass or \$3.20 by mail.
- Vehicles with more than two axles pay a higher, pro-rated toll.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Hundreds Seattle micro-apartments for sale
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/hundreds-of-seattle-micro-apartments-are-for-sale-will-rents-go-up/
GIST	<p>The financial stability of hundreds of Seattle tenants is on the line as public and private players vie for nearly two dozen apartment buildings that have been on the market since this summer.</p> <p>The entire portfolio of finished aPodment-branded micro-apartment buildings is for sale, a total of 23 properties and 1,402 apartments from Northgate to the Central District. Built by Calhoun Properties, the apartments average 177 square feet and rent for an average of \$921, including internet and utilities, according to the brokers listing the buildings. Typical studio and one-bedroom apartments in Seattle go for around \$1,500 to \$1,700.</p> <p>As Seattle-area rents have climbed, the apartments offer a rare bit of affordability for some hourly workers. Baristas making the top end of Seattle's minimum wage, \$17.27, could roughly afford the average aPodment rent without spending more than a third of their income, if they were able to work 40 hours a week.</p> <p>Micro-apartments also come with trade-offs. Some units have kitchenettes, while others have a sink and access to a shared kitchen in the building. Although some apartments are a bit roomier, the most affordable units are more like dorms, with room for a twin bed and desk.</p> <p>A microhousing boom hit the city nearly a decade ago, but politicians soon cracked down to discourage the smallest units amid a heated debate about density and affordability in the fast-growing city.</p> <p>Today, as Seattle's rental market remains expensive and competitive, tenants appear to be making the trade-off. Over the last decade, aPodments saw lower vacancy rates than the overall Seattle apartment market, although more were empty after the pandemic hit in 2020, according to marketing materials for the buildings. Brokers say about 99% of the aPodments were occupied this past June.</p>

That demand could present an upside for a private-market buyer: the chance to raise rents. Instead, some hope a nonprofit buyer could keep the rents stable.

Brokers approached the city and Amazon, which funds some affordable housing projects through its Housing Equity Fund, five months ago, said Berkadia managing director Mitchell Belcher, whose company is listing the apartments.

But when the due date for offers arrived in late September, “we didn’t get any offers with city or Amazon involvement,” Belcher said.

“We’ve heard from a mix of market-rate institutional owners, local high-net worth families and local nonprofits,” Belcher said. Most offers have come from for-profit owners, he said.

Brokers have not publicly disclosed a list price. Comparable properties have sold for an average \$8.3 million each, they say.

The Seattle Office of Housing and Amazon declined to comment.

One local nonprofit, the Low Income Housing Institute, is interested in buying several of the buildings.

“There has been a focus on housing for homeless people. Frankly, there is also a terrific need for people who are working at minimum wage and double minimum wage,” Executive Director Sharon Lee said.

Lee said her organization is interested in buying select buildings in the Central District and Capitol Hill to keep the rents at their current levels. However, it’s not yet clear whether the sellers are willing to split up the portfolio.

Lee declined to say how much LIHI offered for which buildings or how much public funding LIHI would need to secure the deal. The nonprofit would likely need both public funding and a private loan to buy the buildings.

“We think it’s important to preserve this as affordable workforce housing,” Lee said.

Others aren’t so sure.

The Seattle Housing Authority got a cold call from a broker about the buildings for sale, but the authority was “not interested,” said spokesperson Kerry Coughlin. The public housing agency is focused on boosting the number of family-sized apartments “because there’s such a dire shortage of that,” rather than very small rentals, Coughlin said.

Beyond that, microhousing rents are already cheaper than typical studio apartments because they’re smaller, making them somewhat more affordable. “We’re better off putting resources into housing that’s threatened to become unaffordable,” Coughlin said.

As the buildings await a new buyer, tenants wonder what comes next.

Bryann Sotomayor has lived in three different aPodment buildings since moving to Seattle about five years ago. The apartments are small but allowed him to afford to live in the city as he worked minimum-wage jobs in customer service, which was crucial because he doesn’t drive.

Recently, he started part-time contract work as a web developer. Although he’s making more per hour, he’s not sure how long the work might last, so he’s still trying to keep his expenses low. The rent for his aPodment on Capitol Hill recently increased from \$975 to \$1,025, he said.

“I have looked sometimes and haven’t found a cheaper place,” Sotomayor said. Subsidized housing can be more affordable but often has a long waitlist, he said.

His apartment fits a twin bed and desk. There is no kitchen and the sink is too small to comfortably wash larger dishes, like his Instant Pot, Sotomayor said. Tenants share a large kitchen in the building, but it can be noisy.

“I’m not getting a lot of things,” he said, “but it’s what I can afford.”

Sotomayor is not sure what to expect from a new owner. “I hope they let me stay and the rent keeps being low,” he said.

Government funders will likely scrutinize the cost and condition of the buildings.

“It could be an opportunity, but it really comes down to, ‘at what price?’ ” said Steve Walker, executive director of the Washington State Housing Finance Commission, which oversees several funding sources for affordable housing.

At various ages, the 23 buildings will need a careful analysis of their maintenance and update needs. Public funders may also analyze how many tenants are “down-renting,” meaning they could afford higher rents without spending more than a third of their income.

“You may not be solving the problem you think you are, if there’s a lot of down-renting in these units,” Walker said.

Today, the buildings bring in about \$15 million a year, with about \$5 million in expenses, a margin that could be bumped up if the rents were raised, according to the marketing brochure.

At the same time, the brochure notes: “With aPodment rents averaging \$921, a large number of aPodment residents would be at risk of homelessness should rents increase dramatically.”

Ten of the properties are receiving a property tax break in exchange for keeping some of the units affordable for certain low- and moderate-income tenants. Those exemptions will expire in the next few years. The buyer could seek to extend some of them, saving around \$3.3 million over a decade, according to the marketing brochure, or allow them to expire and raise the rents in those apartments.

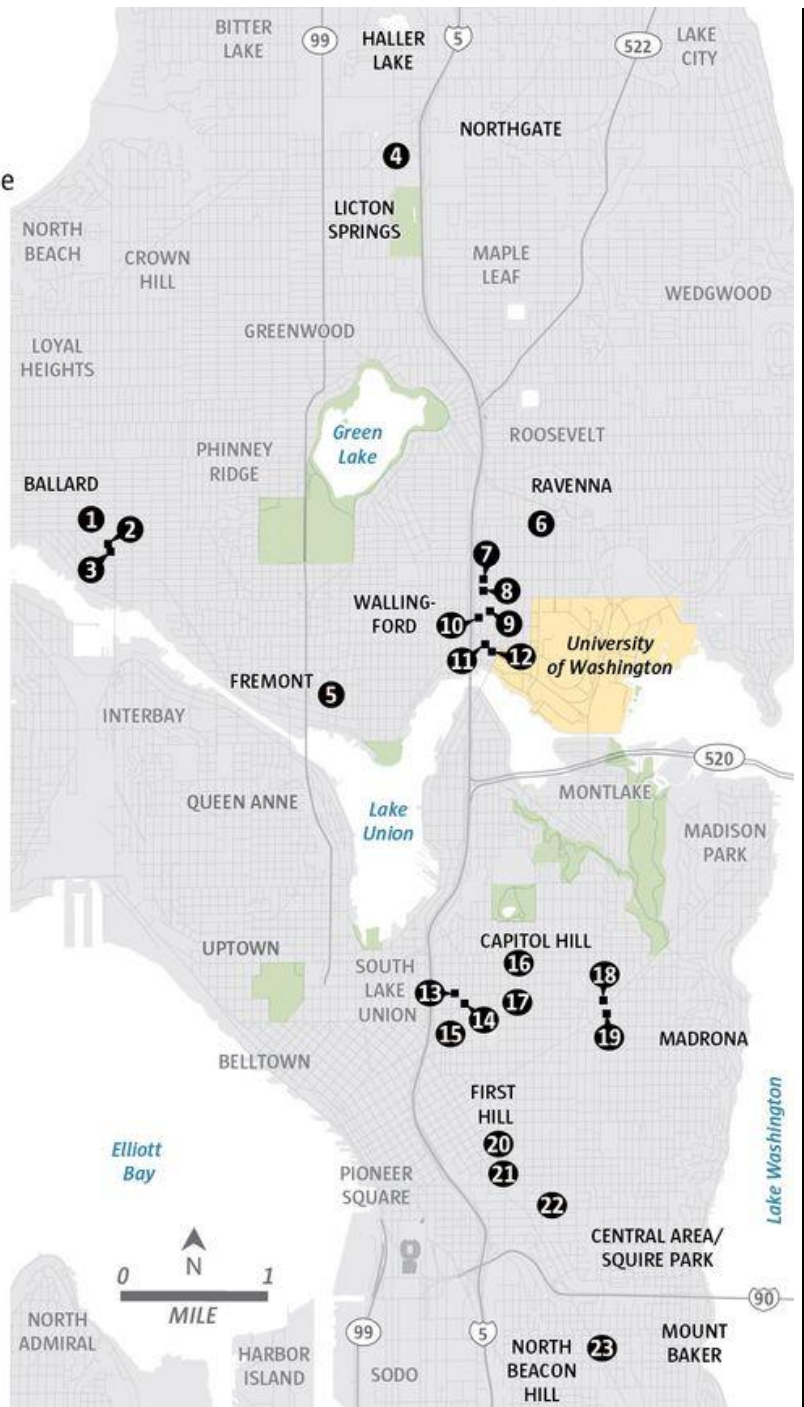
Micro-apartments for sale

Nearly two dozen Seattle aPodment buildings, where apartments average 177 square feet, are for sale.

- ❶ Riano 5611 17th Ave. N.W.
- ❷ Giardino 1514 N.W. 52nd St.
- ❸ Fiora 1510 N.W. 52nd St.
- ❹ Lago 10610 Meridian Ave. N.
- ❺ Positano 3642 Woodland Park Ave. N.
- ❻ Palermo 5528 15th Ave. N.E.
- ❼ Cielo 4520 & 4524 Seventh Ave. N.E.
- ❽ Strada 4516 Seventh Ave. N.E.
- ❾ Venetia 4324 Eighth Ave. N.E.
- ❿ Trovere 4309 Seventh Ave. N.E.
- ⓫ Avenida 4047 Eighth Ave. N.E.
- ⓬ Morino 4032 Eighth Ave. N.E.
- ⓭ Alturra 306 Summit Ave.
- ⓮ Cortena 227 Boylston Ave. E.
- ⓯ Brava 1728 Summit Ave.
- ⓰ Ilaria 1305 E. Mercer St.
- ⓱ Centro 1304 E. John St.
- ⓲ Videre 212 & 216 23rd Ave. E.
- ⓳ Modena 2320 E. Madison St.
- ⓴ Terrazza 413 11th Ave.
- ⓵ Firenze 151 12th Ave.
- ⓶ Solana 310 17th Ave. S.
- ⓷ Genoa 2305 S. Plum St.

Sources: Esri, Berkadia

MARK NOWLIN / THE SEATTLE TIMES



HEADLINE	10/06 King Co. jail using bottled water
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/king-county-jail-using-bottled-water-after-week-of-cloudy-tap-water/
GIST	<p>Officials at King County’s downtown Seattle jail have been distributing bottled water for a week because of discolored tap water.</p> <p>King County officials have tested the water “multiple times in multiple locations” and found that while it remains discolored, it meets U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards for drinking water, Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention spokesperson Noah Haglund said.</p> <p>“Since the water is still cloudy, we are providing bottled water for drinking and cooking purposes,” he said in a statement.</p>

	<p>Officials are still trying to determine the source of the discoloration, Haglund said. They took another round of water samples Thursday and expect results Friday.</p> <p>Haglund said staffers have distributed water to those incarcerated at the King County Jail multiple times a day and upon request since Sept. 29.</p> <p>“Everyone should have ample access,” he said.</p> <p>Last year, contractors finished a project that replaced a large portion of the jail’s water distribution system, he said.</p> <p>The news website PubliCola first reported about the discolored water.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Buying a home in Seattle becomes harder
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/soaring-interest-rates-make-buying-a-home-in-seattle-even-harder/
GIST	<p>High interest rates are making a tough housing market even tougher.</p> <p>Seattle-area homebuyers, especially those looking for their first house, are feeling the pressure of soaring interest rates on top of already-high prices.</p> <p>Despite a slight dip, the average rate for a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage hovered at nearly 6.7% this week, about twice the rate at the start of the year. And while the housing market is cooling off, buyers say home prices haven’t fallen enough to feel like they can afford the interest rates.</p> <p>The result: “We are just kind of holding off,” said Danielle Crawford, who is looking to buy a home in Puyallup. Crawford hopes that prices will drop a bit more or that the interest rate will come down.</p> <p>“I don’t know that either one of those things is going to be happening any time soon,” Crawford said.</p> <p>High mortgage rates are sidelining buyers like Crawford and decreasing the heated competition that fueled the local housing market for the last two years. That has led to a cooldown: fewer people are buying houses and prices in King County dropped 12.4% since this spring.</p> <p>Yet, affording a home is still a challenge.</p> <p>The median single-family home in King County sold for \$875,000 in September, up 6% from a year ago, according to new data released Thursday by the Northwest Multiple Listing Service.</p> <p>Median prices were \$538,000 in Pierce County, \$735,000 in Snohomish County and \$539,997 in Kitsap County.</p> <p>Prices in all four counties ticked down 2-3% from August and were up 6-9% from last year. At this time last year, prices were up between 10% and 19% year over year. This April, King County prices were up nearly 20% from a year earlier.</p> <p>In the Puget Sound region, twice as many homes were sitting on the market at the end of September as at the same time last year.</p> <p>Still, the market is not balanced by industry standards. It would take about two months to sell all the single-family homes for sale in King County at the current demand, according to a measure known as months of inventory. The listing service considers four to six months a balanced market, a level the market hasn’t seen in at least six years.</p>

Crawford and her husband struggled to compete in the frenzied market of the last few years, so they waited to buy, she said. But once they began their search, interest rates were chipping away at their buying power.

The family is hoping to find a three-bedroom home with room in the yard for a swingset for their twin boys, and they don't want to exceed a monthly payment of \$2,600. That put their budget at around \$375,000. Finding homes at that price point has been "incredibly difficult," Crawford said.

The median home price in the Puyallup area last month was \$539,500, up 5.7% from last year.

"Although the interest rate has gone up significantly, the home prices have only come down a little bit, so that changes everything for us," Crawford said.

The family can stretch its budget, she said, but "we still have to buy food. We still have to pay for day care."

Buyers all over the country are facing similar obstacles. Nationally, the typical monthly mortgage payment on a new home was up 83% in August from the same time in 2019, according to Zillow. If rates hit 7%, the monthly payment would be \$4,035 on a typical home in the Seattle area, which includes King, Pierce and Snohomish counties in Zillow's analysis.

First-time buyers are hardest hit by the rate hikes, said Keller Williams agent Bobby Brown.

"They don't have a great deal of savings or a lot of flexibility to be able to go from wanting to buy a \$500,000 house to a \$600,000 house," Brown said.

A percentage point increase can reduce a home shopper's buying power by around 10%. "That's significant to all of those people who were a month ago on the edge," Brown said.

While shopping for a home in Rainier Beach, John Flodin watched the loan amount he qualified for drop from \$500,000 to \$425,000 over the course of a few weeks as interest rates climbed. That made an already difficult search for a starter home even harder.

Hoping to buy a single-family home in order to build equity for retirement, Flodin has run into a slim supply of listings in his price range.

He is now looking farther out, in Kitsap County, SeaTac, Burien and Des Moines.

Median home prices were up 6.9% in September from a year ago in Southwest King County, including areas such as Federal Way, Burien and Des Moines. Prices were up 5.9% in Seattle and 3% on the Eastside.

"Last year, I was really kind of thinking this was my opportunity. And now I'm really feeling somewhat hopeless," Flodin said.

Flodin thought about tapping into his 401(k), but that fund is already suffering from the stock market downturn. With a good salary, decent credit and about a 5% down payment, Flodin knows others are squeezed even more.

"If this is the kind of experience somebody like myself is having, there are a lot of other people in this city, in this region that are going to be unable to make this work, ever," Flodin said.

For buyers wondering whether rates might decline, allowing them to agree to a higher rate now and refinance, Brown urges caution. "You have to be able to weather the storm," he said, warning that lower rates might not be on the horizon soon.

	<p>In a news release from the listing service, Windermere Chief Economist Matthew Gardner predicts home prices will remain up year over year until the spring, when they will “start to trend negative” for “a short period of correction.”</p> <p>Some buyers are finding the upside of the current market.</p> <p>A seller recently accepted Air Force veteran Kevin Colewell’s offer on a house near Spanaway and agreed to pay closing costs, he said. “The tables have turned and now it’s beneficial for people who qualify for a VA loan to get out there and look for a house they want,” Colewell said.</p> <p>Sellers are adjusting their prices and negotiating with buyers. Others are putting off listing their homes for sale, brokers say.</p> <p>If more sellers decide to hold off, it could exacerbate the region’s tight housing inventory, said Wendy Carrington, a John L. Scott agent in Seattle.</p> <p>“We just have such a scarcity of supply overall,” Carrington said, “and we already had that issue before these other factors.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Gas prices shrouded in secrecy amid spike
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/96-cent-hike-in-two-weeks-california-gas-prices-shrouded-in-secrecy-amid-historic-cost-spike/
GIST	<p><i>The Mercury News</i> - As Californians look down the barrel of gasoline prices just cents away from hitting another record, Gov. Gavin Newsom is quick to blame the oil industry for “ripping you off.” But even as Sacramento considers levying a punitive tax on oil companies, experts say state regulators have woefully little insight into an industry that zealously guards information on pricing and operations as confidential trade secrets.</p> <p>Gas prices in California reached \$6.41 a gallon on Tuesday — a dizzying 96-cent increase over the past two weeks — according to AAA. But the California Energy Commission, the state’s main energy policy body, can’t fully explain what is behind the punishing hike.</p> <p>“I wouldn’t even call it flying blind,” Severin Borenstein an energy economist at UC Berkeley, said of the commission. “Everybody scrambles to say, ‘Well, we should do something about this.’ And then the price goes back down and they and everybody go back to ignoring it.”</p> <p>Newsom’s call for a “windfall profits tax” on oil companies last week comes amid a new wrinkle in Golden State drivers’ long-standing misery at the pump.</p> <p>While fuel prices in California are historically higher than the nation — in large part due to the state’s taxes and environmental regulations — the price differential between California and the rest of the country has exploded to \$2.60 a gallon. That is the highest price gap ever.</p> <p>To take one comparison: Florida, which was racked by Hurricane Ian last week, has average gas prices that are \$3.23 cheaper per gallon than California, according to AAA.</p> <p>It’s a problem that may only get worse.</p> <p>As the state transitions away from fossil fuels in the coming years, oil refineries are closing down. That leaves drivers who lack an electric vehicle reliant on a dwindling industry that is increasingly concentrated among a handful of companies and prone to price swings. The most recent price spike only underscores the state’s shaky grasp on the oil-to-gasoline supply chain as Newsom looks to phase out most gas-powered cars by 2035, experts say.</p>

“The long-term problem remains the same. How do you treat an industry that you want to put out of business?” said Tom Kloza, an analyst with OPIS, the Oil Price Information Service. “How do you do that without alienating your constituents with \$10 gas prices?”

Through publicly available information, energy analysts know that the recent price spike is tied to reduced gas production among the state’s oil refiners, which include Marathon Petroleum, Chevron, and PBF Energy. The limited supply and strong fuel demand is causing [gas prices on the commodity market to surge](#) well above the normal gap between California and the rest of the country.

But what’s behind that drop in production is a bigger mystery. Some of the reduced gas flow is due to an unplanned refinery outage in September and infrastructure maintenance that brings capacity offline, according to the California Energy Commission. Still, historically, price hikes of this magnitude are typically brought on by refinery catastrophes — and there have been none of those.

That has left the state’s Energy Commission staff, who are tasked with providing a window into the state’s oil industry, scratching their heads.

“The only thing you could point to are these very minor refinery repairs, which don’t explain it,” said CEC Commissioner David Hochschild.

The lack of transparency is extreme enough that Hochschild turned to oil companies last week asking them to volunteer a basic explanation of the problem. In [a letter addressed to major gas producers](#), he also asked the companies to detail why they allowed their fuel reserves to dwindle, even though the industry typically beefs up reserves before planned maintenance to prevent price shocks. “We wouldn’t be asking for this information if we had it already,” said Hochschild. “We’re doing the best we can with the information we have.”

Borenstein, who has been researching the state’s perplexing gasoline industry for years, said the letter highlights a longstanding complaint of his: The California Energy Commission is ill-equipped to provide oversight of the oil industry.

“They are data collectors, and they can be very valuable inputs about industry practices and operations,” he said. “But ultimately the state needs a set of economists and market analysts who really understand the dynamics in the market.”

The oil industry’s inner mechanics have long been shrouded in secrecy not just in California. It’s a level of confidentiality that has given rise to an entire industry of trade publications, including OPIS, that work to pry out information often based on anonymous sources and sell those details to commodities traders.

Oil companies treat their operations “like a trade secret on the order of the riddle of the Sphinx or the nuclear codes,” said Kloza, the OPIS analyst. Kloza said there is often good reason for the secrecy — oil companies are always on guard against commodities traders looking to capitalize on gasoline supply constraints and make “a pretty penny.”

California’s main oil refiners did not respond to requests for detailed comments.

But Kara Greene, a spokesperson for Western States Petroleum Association, an oil industry trade group, pushed back on contentions that oil companies keep information from regulators. “In times like this they are on daily, sometimes hourly communications, with the California Energy Commission,” she said.

Even so, Greene said the oil industry needs to protect “business sensitive information” just as Apple seeks to safeguard iPhone technology.

Hochschild and Borenstein said the price spike raises concerns of illegal market manipulation, although both said there is currently no evidence to support that concern.

Next year, regulators will have one more oversight tool. Under SB 1322, which Newsom recently signed into law, oil companies will be required to provide the public with a more detailed breakdown of their profit margins on the gasoline they sell every month in California.

But the legislation, which goes into effect in January, will come too late for drivers seeking a deeper understanding of how gas prices went haywire this month, said Jamie Court, president of the advocacy group Consumer Watchdog.

“We won’t know what they’re making now,” he said. “It’s a black box inside a black box.”

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HEADLINE	10/07 Pets at risk for monkeypox from humans?
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/are-pets-risk-catching-monkeypox-humans-rcna50915
GIST	<p>The risk of people with monkeypox passing the virus to their pets is low, the authors of a new study that found no such transmissions in the United Kingdom have concluded.</p> <p>The study’s findings offer a broader perspective in the wake of two recently reported cases of apparent monkeypox transmission from humans to their pets, including a dog in France and a puppy in Brazil.</p> <p>Such rare cases tap into fears that the global monkeypox outbreak could spill over from humans and become endemic in new populations of wild animals. Infectious disease experts anticipate that if such animal reservoirs of the virus were established, they could be impossible to eradicate, or at least challenging to control, and could spark new outbreaks among humans.</p> <p>“I believe that such a risk is becoming higher,” said Huaiping Zhu, director of the Centre for Diseases Modeling at York University in Toronto, arguing that even with global cases declining, cases and the increasing number of rodents still translates to more risk. Zhu is the lead author of a separate study published in September in the Journal of Medical Virology that used mathematical modeling to project how monkeypox might spread from an animal host in a theoretical metropolitan area.</p> <p>Since monkeypox was first discovered in a research monkey in 1958 and humans in 1970, the virus has become endemic in 11 western and central African nations. It has periodically jumped from animals to humans in the region, but until this year had not been documented spreading very widely from person to person. Thanks to what public health experts decry as a woeful lack of investment in monkeypox research predating this year’s outbreak, scientists remain uncertain which animals comprise the viral reservoir in Africa. It’s known that monkeypox can infect more than 50 mammal species and experts believe it may be endemic in wild rodent populations such as rope and sun squirrels, giant-pouched rats and African dormice.</p> <p>Epidemiologists have expressed concern that animal-to-human transfers of viruses will only become more common as climate change and human encroachment upon wild areas increasingly bring people into contact with wild animals.</p> <p>HIV, for example, is believed to have passed from nonhuman primates to humans in western Africa in the early 20th century. SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19, is thought to have originated in bats in eastern China — although a highly politicized debate still rages over whether the coronavirus might have come from a lab.</p> <p>Since June, the United Kingdom Health Security Agency and the Animal and Plant Health Agency have collected survey data regarding the pets of British people diagnosed with monkeypox. Through mid-September, 40 people with monkeypox reported owning 154 pets, including 42 dogs and 26 cats. The study’s authors documented in a paper published in the journal Eurosurveillance last week that none of these animals apparently developed symptoms suggesting monkeypox infection.</p> <p>Acknowledging that their findings are likely based on “substantial under-reporting of pets associated with confirmed cases” of monkeypox, the researchers concluded that the risk of transmission of the virus from</p>

humans to their pets is low. However, they highlighted the possibility of monkeypox spilling over to rodents, which, they wrote, could then infect domesticated animals that could in turn transmit the virus to humans.

It remains possible, the study authors acknowledged, that there have been monkeypox infections in British pets that have gone under the radar, especially if the disease presents differently or asymptomatically in animals. Pet owners may also have refrained from disclosing suspected cases for fear of having their animals put into quarantine.

David Evans, a professor of medical microbiology and immunology at the University of Alberta, who was not involved with the British study, argued that the global monkeypox outbreak still remains small enough to allow for only a very small chance of the virus jumping from humans into a new wild-animal reservoir.

“It’s not a virus that’s particularly easy to transmit except in special circumstances,” he said. “The risk of transmission from humans to companion animals is low; the risk of transmission from that pet to a susceptible host is also low; and the risk of the disease then becoming established is also low. So collectively this scenario seems quite unlikely to come about.”

Lisa Scheuermann, a technical officer at the World Health Organization, said that a clearer understanding of the risk of human-to-animal spillover of monkeypox “would need further research into susceptibility and clinical presentation of different animal species, as well as modes of transmission between humans and animals, and viral persistence in the environment.”

The outbreak was first identified in the U.K. in mid-May and has since been diagnosed in [70,696 people](#) in 107 nations, including [26,385](#) in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The weekly case rate peaked both in the U.S. and the world at large in mid-August and has since fallen off steadily, although cases are still rising in some nations, including Mexico and Colombia. The overall decline, experts theorize, has been driven by sexual behavioral change, vaccination and post-infection immunity.

Lower risk of spreading monkeypox to pets

Throughout the outbreak, monkeypox, which causes lesions that [can be extremely painful](#), [has spread overwhelmingly](#) among gay and bisexual men — largely, [some researchers have argued](#), through anal and oral intercourse. Traditionally, the virus is known to transmit between humans through skin-to-skin contact and, less commonly, through clothing, bedding and towels that have been contaminated through contact with lesions.

[According to the CDC](#), people might be able to transmit monkeypox to their pets through close contact such as petting, cuddling, being licked, and sharing a bed. The agency advises that people with the virus avoid contact with animals or send pets to live elsewhere until such owners have recovered from the approximately three-week symptomatic phase of the infection. In the French case, two men with monkeypox slept in the same bed as their Italian greyhound.

“Washing bedding is going to be incredibly important, and keeping pets out of their bedroom,” said Meghan Davis, an associate professor of environmental health and engineering at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, of how people with monkeypox can mitigate the risk of passing the virus to their pets.

In a report on the outbreak [published](#) last week, CDC officials expressed concern that monkeypox could establish a reservoir in one or more species found in the United States. Mammals such as prairie dogs or squirrels are known to be susceptible to infection.

In 2003, [the U.S. saw](#) 72 confirmed or suspected cases of monkeypox in the Midwest after infected rodents imported from Ghana shared bedding and caging with prairie dogs that were sold as pets. However, there were no cases of human-to-human transmission of the virus and the outbreak was quickly contained.

	<p>In an effort to monitor the risk of human-to-pet transmission of monkeypox, the CDC is partnering with the departments of health in Minnesota, Tennessee, Virginia and Washington, D.C., to collect samples from pets of people with the virus.</p> <p>Expressing concern that rodents could contract monkeypox from contamination of articles within people's homes, such as bedding, Davis argued that health authorities should go beyond analyzing pets and look for monkeypox cases in wild animals, such as mice that infest homes.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Layoffs rising as economy slows
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/layoffs-initial-unemployment-claims-jobless-benefits-2022-10-06/
GIST	<p>More U.S. companies are cutting jobs and freezing hiring as the economy cools, a sign that efforts by the Federal Reserve to tamp down inflation are hitting the labor market.</p> <p>Layoff announcements spiked in September, according to outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas. Job cuts last month rose to nearly 30,000, an increase of 46% from August, while the number of companies announcing hiring plans last month fell to the lowest level in more than a decade, the firm said.</p> <p>"Some cracks are beginning to appear in the labor market. Hiring is slowing and downsizing events are beginning to occur," Andrew Challenger, senior vice president of Challenger, Gray & Christmas, said in a statement.</p> <p>Government figures also point to a slowing job market. Jobless claims for the week ending October 1 rose by 29,000, to 219,000, the Labor Department said on Thursday. The total number of Americans collecting unemployment aid rose by 15,000 to nearly 1.4 million for the week ending September 24.</p> <p>"We won't read too much into one week's claims data, but if an upward trend persists, it would be consistent with other recent indicators pointing to some loosening of labor market conditions," economists at Oxford Economics said in a research note.</p> <p>Applications for jobless aid generally reflect layoffs, which have remained historically low since the initial purge of more than 20 million jobs at the start of the coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2020. However, the technology sector has seen a hiring slowdown, with dozens of companies announcing layoffs or hiring freezes. Last week, Meta said it planned to reduce headcount for the first time in the company's history.</p> <p>Netflix, Peloton, Snap, Twilio, Taboola and Twitter have all announced layoffs. Google parent Alphabet has shut its video-game streaming service, Stadia, and Amazon has reportedly frozen corporate hiring in its retail division.</p> <p>The number of available jobs in the U.S. plummeted in August compared with July, the government said earlier this week. The drop of more than 1 million open jobs signals that employers are pulling back on hiring as they contemplate economic uncertainty ahead.</p> <p>The Federal Reserve is closely watching job-openings data for signs that demand for workers is cooling off. Fed Chair Jerome Powell has repeatedly cited the high number of open jobs as one driver of historically high inflation and has signaled that the unemployment rate will likely rise as part of the Fed's push to curb inflation.</p> <p>The U.S. central bank has raised its key interest rate to a range of 3% to 3.25%, up from near zero at the start of this year. The sharp rate hikes have pushed mortgage rates up to 15-year highs and made other borrowing costlier. The Fed hopes the higher interest rate will slow borrowing and spending and push inflation closer to its target of 2%.</p>

As part of that effort, the Fed expects the unemployment rate to increase to about 4.4% by next year, which is equivalent to 1.2 million people losing jobs.

On Friday, the government is expected to report hiring data for September. Wall Street analysts estimate that 250,000 jobs were added last month. If the figures turn out substantially higher, it could spur the Fed to hike rates even faster, according to Wall Street analysts.

Last week, the government reported the U.S. economy shrank for the second straight quarter, but so far that has done little to cool the job *market*.

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HEADLINE	10/06 CDC ends daily Covid cases, deaths report
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-19-cases-deaths-cdc-ends-daily-reporting-weekly-updates/
GIST	<p>After more than two years of publishing data on COVID-19 cases and deaths on a daily basis, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced Thursday it would shift to weekly updates to its nationwide tracking of the virus.</p> <p>"To allow for additional reporting flexibility, reduce the reporting burden on states and jurisdictions, and maximize surveillance resources, CDC is moving to a weekly reporting cadence," the agency wrote in a post to explain the move.</p> <p>Starting on October 20, state and local health departments will now only need to report new COVID-19 cases and deaths to the agency every week on Wednesdays.</p> <p>The CDC's COVID-19 Community Level ratings, which guide recommendations on whether counties should be taking steps like masking to curb a surge in hospitalizations, are already updated only weekly on Thursdays. COVID-19 forecasts updated by the agency will also now come on a day later on Thursdays.</p> <p>The CDC's move to ditch daily COVID-19 reporting follows many states and other countries, which had already stopped releasing these daily metrics earlier this year.</p> <p>Health officials have long acknowledged that new COVID-19 cases are now being largely undercounted, given the widespread use of unreported at-home tests for the virus.</p> <p>The agency also moved over the summer to shift from daily to weekly reporting of vaccinations, which are now published only on Thursdays.</p> <p>Other parts of the CDC's online COVID-19 tools are also being wound down this month.</p> <p>A "self-checker" chatbot to help people figure out when to seek testing and medical care is due to be scrapped on Friday. The CDC's country-by-country travel notices for the virus were erased earlier this week.</p> <p>For now, the CDC is still publishing data on COVID-19 hospitalizations that are collected daily through a separate agency: the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. It is unclear if daily reporting of these figures will continue after COVID-19 hospitalization data is handed over to the CDC's control in December.</p> <p>The shift to weekly reporting echoes the way the CDC tracks some other viruses. For example, the agency has long published a weekly report on data collected about the surveillance of influenza around the country.</p> <p>However, the CDC is still publishing daily updates to its tally of cases in the monkeypox virus outbreak, even as some countries abroad have shifted to weekly updates and the pace of new cases in the U.S. has slowed steeply.</p>

It also comes as federal health authorities have been bracing for a potential repeat of the past two deadly winter waves of COVID-19, paired with a [possibly severe flu season](#).

"I was on the phone with colleagues in health departments throughout the country just two nights ago, and everyone is having the same experience," Dr. Anthony Fauci, the president's [outgoing](#) chief medical adviser, said Tuesday at an [event](#) hosted by the University of Southern California.

Fauci cited a "considerable diminution" around the country in cases, hospitalizations, and deaths reported from COVID-19.

But he warned that an array of new variants now growing across the country, plus the risk respiratory diseases pose every winter, suggested "it would be a bit cavalier to all of a sudden say we're completely through with it."

"Although we can feel good that we're going in the right direction, we can't let our guard down," said Fauci.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Kentucky still waiting FEMA flood help
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/kentucky-flooding-residents-still-waiting-for-help/
GIST	<p><i>Whitesburg, Kentucky</i> — As Florida begins its long recovery from Hurricane Ian, Kentucky residents understand what the state is going through. More than two months ago, heavy rains resulted in Kentucky's worst flooding disaster in decades — and many communities are still waiting for help, prompting calls for more action at the federal level.</p> <p>The storm caused 40 deaths and hundreds of millions of dollars in damage — and the signs of lives upended are everywhere. Third-generation coal miner Roger Hatton is still sifting through debris and memories after the flooding destroyed his home.</p> <p>"We have got a porch to sit on. Some people don't got a porch to sit on," Hatton said. "Some people are living in tents."</p> <p>One of the most enduring images of the Kentucky floods is of 17-year-old Chloe Adams clinging to her dog, Sandy, on a neighbor's rooftop for five hours.</p> <p>"I didn't know how to deal with that situation. I didn't know what was going to happen and I really did think I was not going to make it out alive," said Adams, whose cousin later rescued them on a kayak.</p> <p>She still has not returned to her hometown of Whitesburg.</p> <p>"I don't think I would ever be able to comfortably sleep there again," she said.</p> <p>A nonprofit kitchen is providing the displaced an average of 1,200 meals a day. The start of the school year was delayed after five of the school district's eight campuses were damaged. The state has also been rolling out some temporary homes.</p> <p>"I believe that people should pull themselves up by their bootstraps. But their bootstraps have washed down the creek," said state Rep. Angie Hatton, who lives in Whitesburg.</p> <p>She said the problem for many now is navigating the process of securing aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.</p> <p>"It takes some sort of Olympic athlete to jump through the hoops," she said. "So I keep calling on our representatives in Congress and the U.S. Senate to please do something about FEMA."</p>

	<p>Overall, FEMA has doled out more than \$70 million to help with the recovery — but victims like Vanessa Rouse, a single mother of two, are stuck in limbo.</p> <p>Rouse says her flood insurance and homeowners insurance are at odds over who should cover the damage. For now, she's paying a mortgage on a house she can't live in.</p> <p>"I used to come here almost every day, but I don't come that often anymore," she said of her home. "Because it's so sad. Because every day it's more and more apparent of the loss."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Screening travelers from Uganda for Ebola
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/us-begin-screening-travelers-coming-uganda-ebola-91118707
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- The United States will begin screening travelers coming from Uganda for Ebola as an additional precaution aimed at trying to prevent an outbreak in the African country from spreading, the Biden administration said Thursday.</p> <p>There have been no Ebola cases from the outbreak reported outside Uganda, and the risk in the U.S. is considered low. U.S. officials described the screening move as an additional precaution.</p> <p>The screenings will begin rolling out immediately. Travelers who have been in Uganda at any point during the past 21 days, which is the incubation period for the virus, will be redirected to one of five U.S. airports for Ebola screening: Kennedy International Airport in New York, Washington Dulles International Airport, Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey, Chicago's O'Hare International Airport and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.</p> <p>The screening applies to any passenger who was in Uganda, including U.S. citizens. It involves a temperature and symptom check conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC will also collect contact information that will be shared with local health departments at the travelers' destination.</p> <p>The administration says about 145 people per day enter the U.S. from Uganda, with most already arriving at the five large airline hubs. Anyone scheduled to fly into a different airport will be rebooked by their airline, the administration said.</p> <p>Also Thursday, the CDC sent a health alert to doctors, urging them to get a travel history from patients who have Ebola-like symptoms.</p> <p>The Ebola virus disease is mainly spread through contact with blood and other bodily fluids of an infected person who is sick or died. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain and sometimes bleeding. There are Ebola vaccines, but not for the Sudan strain causing the current outbreak.</p> <p>This marks the sixth Ebola outbreak in Uganda, but this one has escalated quickly. As of Thursday, there have been 44 confirmed cases and 10 confirmed deaths since the first case was diagnosed Sept. 19.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 CDC data: 86% kids have Covid antibodies
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/86-kids-17-antibodies-past-covid-infection-cdc/story?id=91106508
GIST	<p>More than eight in 10 kids under the age of 17 have antibodies from a past COVID-19 infection, according to new data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>The analysis shows that as of August, 86% of children between 6 months and 17-years-old have had at least one COVID infection since the pandemic began.</p>

That number is an increase from data in April, when the public health agency found 75% of people under the age of 17 had been infected with the virus.

"What we have to recognize is this is more of an indication that there's been broad spread of this virus in the pediatric community," said Dr. John Brownstein, an ABC News contributor and chief innovation officer at Boston Children's Hospital. "And that, you know, the kids are not sheltered from this virus. And we know that in a small number of cases, there's severe impacts."

What the findings don't mean is that 86% of children and adolescents are now protected against COVID reinfection because they've had COVID before. Experts have noted that they don't know exactly how long protection from infection lasts after contracting the virus.

"What we should not take away from this data is that that the kids are now immune from infection, so we can't make the leap that continual investment in vaccines and protections of our kids is not important," Brownstein said. "As we know, immunity wanes, variants evolved to evade prior immunity and so, you know, this is more a reflection of how amazingly widespread this virus is but it's not a reflection of future risk."

One ABC News analysis of state data found that, as of June, there'd been more than 1.6 million reinfections across 24 states, but experts said the number was likely much higher.

The CDC recommends everyone, regardless of prior infections, stay up to date on vaccinations -- including the newest booster shot, which targets the currently circulating BA.4 and 5 variant.

The agency recommends people ages 12 and older to receive one updated booster at least two months after their last vaccine dose. Boosters are also available for kids ages 5 through 11, but only if they received the Pfizer-BioNTech primary vaccine series.

The booster for that age group targets the original virus strain, not variants, but the CDC has said it expects vaccine boosters designed to target variants like omicron to be available for children aged 5-11 years by mid-October.

And Dr. Peter Marks, the FDA's vaccine chief, said in late September he was "confident that we're only a matter of weeks away" from authorizing new boosters for the 5-11 age range. For kids under 5, Marks said there were still "a few months away" from authorization.

In the meantime, Marks encouraged parents to make sure their children get the primary vaccine series.

"There are a lot of kids ages 5 to 11 out there who haven't had their primary series, so you can't get the updated booster until you've had the primary series. So it's a good idea to think about getting your child vaccinated against COVID-19," he said.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Europe leaders hail united stand on Russia
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/europes-leaders-gather-prague-russia-invited-91094170
GIST	<p>PRAGUE -- Leaders across Europe hailed on Thursday their united front against Russia's war on Ukraine at a summit that also saw the heads of old foes Turkey and Armenia meet face-to-face for the first time since they agreed last year to put decades of bitterness behind them.</p> <p>The inaugural summit of the European Political Community brought together the 27 European Union member countries, aspiring partners in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, as well as neighbors like Britain — the only country to have left the EU.</p>

Russia was the one major European power not invited to the gathering at Prague Castle along with Belarus, its neighbor and supporter in the war against Ukraine; a conflict fueling an energy crisis and high inflation that are wreaking havoc on Europe's economies.

“Leaders leave this summit with greater collective resolve to stand up to Russian aggression. What we have seen in Prague is a forceful show of solidarity with Ukraine, and for the principles of freedom and democracy,” said U.K. Prime Minister Liz Truss.

Her Belgian counterpart, Alexander De Croo, said “if you just look at the attendance here, you see the importance. The whole European continent is here, except two countries: Belarus and Russia. So it shows how isolated those two countries are.”

Latvian Prime Minister Krisjanis Karins said the fallout from the war is something they all have in common.

“It’s affecting all of us in the security sense, and its affecting all of us through our economies, through the rising energy costs. So the only way that we can handle this is working together, and not just the European Union. All the European countries need to work together,” he said.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal was in Prague for the meeting, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the leaders by video link.

“There are no representatives of Russia with us here — a state that geographically seems to belong to Europe, but from the point of view of its values and behavior is the most anti-European state in the world,” Zelenskyy said.

“We are now in a strong position to direct all possible powers of Europe to end the war and guarantee long-term peace,” he said. “For Ukraine, for Europe, for the world.”

The new forum is the brainchild of French President Emmanuel Macron and is backed by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. They say it should aim to boost security and prosperity across the continent.

Critics claim the new forum is an attempt to put the brakes on EU enlargement. Others fear it may become a talking shop, perhaps convening once or twice a year but devoid of any real clout or content.

“We will never accept (a situation) where this platform brings harm to our accession negotiations,” Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told reporters. “Our expectation is for the European Political Community to help strengthen and contribute to our relations with the EU.”

But the host of the event, Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala, said it had been a success.

“We don’t replace existing formats of cooperation. We did not adopt any official resolution. We just feel the need of having space for informal exchange of views on ongoing events in Europe and beyond,” Fiala told reporters. He said the next meeting will be held in Moldova, then others in Spain and the U.K.

The summit did create space for a series of meetings. Erdogan and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held landmark talks. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev was also present at what appeared to be an informal gathering of the three leaders.

Turkey and Armenia, which have no diplomatic relations, agreed last year to start talks aimed at putting decades of enmity behind them and reopen their joint border. Special envoys appointed by the two countries have held four rounds of talks since then.

Truss, Macron and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte held talks on migration, as the U.K. seeks further help in preventing migrants from reaching its shores without authorization. Macron was even cautiously optimistic that the EU and the U.K. might be able to put their Brexit differences behind them.

	<p>“I do hope this is a new phase of our common relations and that this is the beginning of the day after,” he told reporters.</p> <p>Macron listed topics on which leaders agreed to work by the next summit in Moldova, including protecting “key facilities” like pipelines, undersea cables, satellites. “We need a European strategy to protect them,” he said, after two gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea were apparently sabotaged.</p> <p>But some old enmities also found a new forum to air themselves in. Referring to Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Erdogan said that “a certain gentleman became very disturbed” by his remarks in one meeting. Erdogan was also critical of the Greek leadership in Cyprus.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Sweden seizes evidence at pipeline leak site
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/sweden-completes-investigation-baltic-sea-pipeline-leaks-91099663
GIST	<p>COPENHAGEN, Denmark -- Sweden’s domestic security agency said Thursday that its preliminary investigation of leaks from two Russian gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea “has strengthened the suspicions of serious sabotage” as the cause and a prosecutor said evidence at the site has been seized.</p> <p>The Swedish Security Service said the probe confirmed that “detonations” caused extensive damage to the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines last week. Authorities had said when the leaks off Sweden and Denmark first surfaced that explosions were recorded in the area.</p> <p>The agency, which said what happened in the Baltic Sea was “very serious,” didn’t give details about its investigation.</p> <p>But in a separate statement, Swedish prosecutor Mats Ljungqvist said “seizures have been made at the crime scene and these will now be investigated.”</p> <p>Ljungqvist, who led the preliminary investigation, did not identify the seized evidence. Ljungqvist said he had given “directives to temporarily block (the area) and carry out a crime scene investigation.”</p> <p>Now that the initial probe is completed, a blockade around the pipelines off Sweden will be lifted, he said.</p> <p>The governments of Denmark and Sweden previously said they suspected that several hundred pounds of explosives were involved in carrying out a deliberate act of sabotage. The leaks from Nord Stream 1 and 2 discharged huge amounts of methane into the air.</p> <p>Last week, undersea explosions ruptured Nord Stream 2 and its sister pipeline, Nord Stream 2, at two locations off Sweden and two off Denmark. The pipelines were built to carry Russian natural gas to Germany.</p> <p>Danish authorities said the two methane leaks they were monitoring in international waters stopped over the weekend. One of the leaks off Sweden also appeared to have ended.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin accused the West of attacking the pipelines, which the United States and its allies have vehemently denied, noting that Russia has the most to gain in wrecking havoc on Europe’s energy markets.</p> <p>Separately the Swedish coast guard said “the remaining emissions is more or less unchanged,” and that it was returning to its ordinary environmental rescue operations.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Fewer migrants cross Mediterranean
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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/explainer-fewer-people-cross-mediterranean-die-91151656
GIST	<p>ROME -- The back-to-back shipwrecks of migrant smuggling boats off Greece has once again put the spotlight on the dangers of the Mediterranean migration route, the risks migrants and refugees are willing to take and the political infighting that has thwarted a safe European response to people fleeing war, poverty and climate change.</p> <p>Here's a look at the migration situation across the Mediterranean Sea:</p> <p>WHAT HAPPENED TO TWO SMUGGLERS' BOATS OFF GREECE?</p> <p>Bodies floated amid splintered wreckage off a Greek island on Thursday as the death toll from separate sinkings of two migrant boats rose to 22, with about a dozen still missing. The vessels went down hundreds of miles apart, in one case prompting a dramatic overnight rescue effort as island residents and firefighters pulled shipwrecked migrants to safety up steep cliffs.</p> <p>The Greek shipwrecks came just days after Italy commemorated the ninth anniversary of one of the deadliest Mediterranean shipwrecks in recent memory, the Oct. 3, 2013 capsizing of a migrant ship off Lampedusa, Sicily, in which 368 people died.</p> <p>WHAT ARE THE TRENDS IN MEDITERRANEAN MIGRANT ARRIVALS?</p> <p>So far this year, the International Organization of Migration has recorded around 109,000 “irregular” arrivals to the Mediterranean countries of Italy, Spain, Greece, Cyprus and Malta by land or sea. This has made immigration a hot political topic in those European Union nations.</p> <p>U.N. refugee officials note that overall numbers of migrants seeking to come to Europe this way has decreased over the years, to an average of around 120,000 annually. They call that a relatively “manageable” number, especially compared to the 7.4 million Ukrainians who have fled their homeland this year to escape Russia’s invasion, and were welcomed by European countries.</p> <p>“We’ve seen how quickly and how rapidly a response was mounted to deal with that situation in a very humane and commendable way,” said Shabia Mantoo, spokesperson for the U.N. refugee agency in Geneva. “If we can see that happen very concretely in this situation, why can’t it be applied for 120,000 people that are coming across to Europe on a yearly basis?”</p> <p>Others see Europe's harsh response to Mediterranean migrants, who often come from Africa, and its welcoming of Slavic Ukrainian migrants as racist.</p> <p>HOW DANGEROUS IS THE MEDITERRANEAN?</p> <p>So far this year the IOM has reported 1,522 dead or missing migrants in the Mediterranean. Overall, the IOM says 24,871 migrants have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean since 2014, with the real number believed to be even higher given the number of shipwrecks that never get reported.</p> <p>“The voyage toward Italy has been confirmed to be the most dangerous,” said the ISMU foundation in Italy, which conducts research on migration trends.</p> <p>The Central Mediterranean migration route that takes migrants from Libya or Tunisia north to Europe is the deadliest known migration route in the world, accounting for more than half of the reported deaths in the Mediterranean that IOM has tracked since 2014. The route has Italy as its prime destination.</p> <p>WHAT ARE THE DEADLIEST KNOWN SMUGGLING SHIPWRECKS?</p> <p>On April 18, 2015, the Mediterranean’s deadliest known shipwreck in living memory occurred when an overcrowded fishing boat collided 77 nautical miles off Libya with a freighter that was trying to come to its rescue. Only 28 people survived. At first it was feared the hull held the remains of 700 people. Forensic</p>

experts who set out to try to identify all the dead concluded in 2018 that there were originally 1,100 people on board.

On Oct. 3, 2013, a trawler packed with more than 500 people, many from Eritrea and Ethiopia, caught fire and capsized within sight of an uninhabited islet off Italy's southern island of Lampedusa. Local fishermen rushed to try to help save lives. In the end, 155 survived and 368 people died.

One week later, a shipwreck occurred on Oct 11, 2013, further out at sea, 60 miles south of Lampedusa in what has become known in Italy as the "slaughter of children." In all, more than 260 people died, among them 60 children. The Italian newsweekly L'Espresso in 2017 published the audio recordings of the migrants' desperate calls for help and Italian and Maltese authorities seemingly delaying the rescue.

WHAT ARE OTHER MEDITERRANEAN MIGRATION ROUTES TO EUROPE?

The Western Mediterranean route is used by migrants seeking to reach Spain from Morocco or Algeria. The Eastern Mediterranean route, where the shipwrecks occurred this week off Greece, has traditionally been used by Syrian, Iraqi, Afghan and other non-African migrants who flee first to Turkey and then try to reach Greece or other European destinations.

Greece was a key transit point for hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees entering the EU in 2015-16, many fleeing wars in Iraq and Syria, though the numbers dropped sharply after the EU and Turkey reached a deal in 2016 to limit smugglers. Greece has since toughened its borders and built a steel wall along its land border with Turkey. Greece has also been accused by Turkey and some migration experts of pushing back migrants, a charge it denies.

For its part, Greece says Turkey has failed to stop smugglers active on its shoreline and has been using migrants to apply political pressure to the whole European Union.

HOW HAS MIGRATION DIVIDED THE EU'S 27 nations?

Mediterranean countries have for years complained that they have been left to bear the brunt of welcoming and processing migrants, and have long demanded other European countries step up and take them in.

Poland, Hungary and other Eastern European nations refused an EU plan to share the burdens of carrying for the migrants.

Human rights groups have condemned how the EU in recent years has outsourced migrant rescues to the Libyan coast guard, which brings the migrants back to horrific camps on land where many are beaten, raped and abused.

"Over the years, the routes have changed but not the tragedies," said the Sant'Egidio Community as it commemorated the 2013 Lampedusa anniversary this week. Working with other Christian groups, the Catholic charity has brought more than 5,000 refugees to Italy via "humanitarian corridors" and has called for more safe passages to be organized so migrants don't have to risk dangerous Mediterranean crossings with smugglers.

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HEADLINE	10/07 Philippine president reaffirms US ties
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/marcos-jr-reaffirms-us-ties-100-days-presidency-91153263
GIST	MANILA, Philippines -- Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has been reaffirming ties with the United States in a key turnaround from the often-hostile demeanor his predecessor displayed toward Manila's treaty ally.

Marcos Jr., who marks his 100th day in office Saturday, inherited daunting problems at home, including a coronavirus pandemic-battered economy, soaring inflation, unemployment and mounting foreign and domestic debt, in addition to longstanding poverty and decades-old insurgencies.

In terms of foreign policy, a key focus in his first months in office has been to rekindle U.S.-Philippines relations.

But Marcos Jr., 65, is the namesake son of the dictator who was ousted in a 1986 pro-democracy uprising amid widespread human rights atrocities and plunder. He has defended his father's legacy. Given U.S. President Joe Biden's high-profile advocacy for democracy and human rights, more than a few have been surprised over the goodwill that has unfolded between the leaders in recent months.

"It's a quantum leap," Manila-based analyst Richard Heydarian said. "Marcos Jr. is, ironically, seen as a breath of fresh air in the United States."

America's relations with the Philippines — its oldest treaty ally in Asia — entered a difficult period under former President Rodrigo Duterte. During his time at the country's helm from 2016, he threatened to sever ties with Washington, kick visiting American forces out and once attempted to abrogate a major defense pact with the U.S. while nurturing cozy ties with China and Russia.

Duterte made five visits to China and two to Russia but vowed never to set foot in America. He had bristled at U.S. criticisms of his notoriously deadly crackdown against illegal drugs, including by then-President Barack Obama, whom he cursed and asked in a speech "to go to hell."

But Duterte's successor took a different approach.

Last month, Marcos Jr. flew to the U.S. to deliver a speech at the U.N. General Assembly and met Biden for the first time on the sidelines. Biden was the first world leader to call and congratulate Marcos Jr. after his landslide victory in the May 9 elections.

"We've had some rocky times, but the fact is, it's a critical, critical relationship, from our perspective. I hope you feel the same way," Biden told Marcos Jr. in a news conference.

"We continue to look to the United States for that continuing partnership and the maintenance of peace in our region," Marcos Jr. told Biden. "We are your partners. We are your allies. We are your friends."

Marcos Jr. brought key Cabinet members and a business delegation to meet potential American investors. At a New York Stock Exchange economic forum, he underscored Manila's commitment to engage Washington: "I cannot see the Philippines in the future without having the United States as a partner."

Investment pledges worth about \$4 billion were secured in his U.S. visit, which could generate more than 100,000 jobs in the Philippines, officials said.

"After six years of destructive populism under Duterte, he suddenly came out as a kind of a much-welcome statesman in the eyes of many foreign partners," analyst Heydarian said of Marcos Jr., adding that the Philippine leader was expected to continue fostering close ties with Beijing despite his overtures to the U.S.

Marcos Jr. has refused calls by opponents to apologize for the abuses under the dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s. He has stayed away from controversies surrounding his late father and their family, especially during the electoral campaign. He and his running mate — now Vice President Sara Duterte — steadfastly stuck to a call for national unity despite the deep divisions the Marcos dictatorship and Rodrigo Duterte, her father, had caused.

In instances when the issues came up unexpectedly, however, Marcos Jr. has been defensive, saying in a recent Philippine TV interview that it was wrong for his father to be called a dictator.

	<p>In an interview with The Associated Press while he was in New York, Marcos Jr. said it was useless to go into endless debates about the past.</p> <p>“I’m not about to change my political position,” he said. “They clearly are not about to change their political position either. So, what’s the point?”</p> <p>“They put you there to help, to be of service and so, that’s what I will do.” Marcos Jr. said.</p> <p>Still, Biden’s officials have said human rights were at the top of the agenda in each of their engagements with Marcos Jr. and his officials.</p> <p>As Marcos Jr. rose to power, the U.S. was embarking on a strategy to considerably broaden American engagement by strengthening a web of security alliances and partnerships amid China’s growing influence and ambitions.</p> <p>American officials have repeatedly assured the Philippines they would honor their treaty obligations if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under attack in the disputed South China Sea, where Beijing, Manila and four other governments have been locked in territorial rifts for decades.</p> <p>The northern Philippines is strategically located across a strait from Taiwan and could serve as a crucial outpost in case tensions worsen between China and the self-governed island.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/07 Putin pledged stability, now nuclear threats
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/putins-path-pledges-stability-nuclear-threats-91152141
GIST	<p>As he turns 70, Russian President Vladimir Putin finds himself in the eye of a storm of his own making: His army is suffering humiliating defeats in Ukraine. Hundreds of thousands of Russians are fleeing his mobilization order, and his top lieutenants are publicly insulting military leaders.</p> <p>With his room for maneuvering narrowing, Putin has repeatedly signaled that he could resort to nuclear weapons to protect the Russian gains in Ukraine — a harrowing threat that shatters the claims of stability he has repeated throughout his 22-year rule.</p> <p>“This is really a hard moment for him, but he can’t accuse anyone else. He did it himself,” said Andrei Kolesnikov, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment. “And he is going straight ahead to big, big problems.”</p> <p>By unleashing the disastrous war in Ukraine, Europe’s largest military conflict since World War II, Putin has broken an unwritten social contract in which Russians tacitly agreed to forgo post-Soviet political freedoms in exchange for relative prosperity and internal stability.</p> <p>Mikhail Zygar, a journalist who has had extensive contacts among the Kremlin elite and published a bestselling book about Putin and his entourage, noted that the invasion came as a complete surprise not only for the public but for Putin’s closest associates.</p> <p>“All of them are in shock,” Zygar said. “None of them wanted to see the developments unfold in such a way just because they are going to lose everything. Now they are all stained by blood, and they all understand they have nowhere to run.”</p> <p>Stanislav Belkovsky, a longtime political consultant with extensive contacts among the ruling class, described the invasion as a mechanism of “self-destruction for Putin, his regime and the Russian Federation.”</p>

With the Russian army retreating under the blows of Ukrainian forces armed with Western weapons, Putin raised the stakes by annexing four Ukrainian regions and declaring a partial mobilization of up to 300,000 reservists to buttress the crumbling front line.

The poorly organized call-up has triggered broad chaos. The military is struggling to provide supplies for new recruits, many of whom were told to buy medical kits and other basics themselves and were left to sleep on the floor while waiting to be sent to the front.

Social networks have been abuzz with discussions about how to dodge recruitment, and hundreds of thousands of men fled the mobilization, swarming Russia's borders with ex-Soviet neighbors.

The mobilization, Kolesnikov noted, has eroded Putin's core support base and set the stage for potential political upheavals. "After the partial mobilization, it's impossible to explain to anyone that he stabilized the system. He disrupted the foundation of stability," he said.

The military setbacks also drew public insults from some of Putin's top lieutenants directed toward military leaders. The Kremlin has done nothing to halt the criticism, a signal that Putin could use it to set the stage for a major shakeup of the top brass and blame them for the defeats.

"The infighting between powerful clans in Putin's entourage could destabilize the system and significantly weaken Putin's control over the situation in the country," Belkovsky said.

The widening turmoil marks a dramatic contrast with the image of stability Putin has cultivated since taking helm in 2000. He has repeatedly described the turbulent rule of his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, as a time of decay when national riches were pilfered by Kremlin-connected tycoons and the West while millions were plunged into poverty.

Russians have eagerly embraced Putin's promises to restore their country's grandeur amid oil-driven economic prosperity, and they have been largely indifferent to the Kremlin's relentless crackdown on political freedoms.

Insiders who have closely studied Putin's thinking say he still believes he can emerge as a winner.

Belkovsky argued that Putin hopes to win by using energy as an instrument of pressure. By reducing the gas flow to Europe and striking a deal with OPEC to reduce oil output, he could drive prices up and raise pressure on the U.S. and its allies.

Putin wants the West to tacitly accept the current status quo in Ukraine, resume energy cooperation with Russia, lift the most crippling sanctions and unfreeze Russian assets, Belkovsky said.

"He still believes that he will get his way in the long showdown with the West, where the situation on the Ukrainian front line is just one important, but not decisive, element," Belkovsky said.

At the same time, Putin threatened to use "all means available" to defend the newly annexed Ukrainian territories in a blunt attempt to force Ukraine and its Western allies to back off.

The U.S. and its allies have said they are taking Putin's threats seriously but will not yield to what they describe as blackmail to force the West to abandon Ukraine. Ukraine vowed to press its counteroffensive despite the Russian rhetoric.

Kolesnikov described Putin's nuclear threats as a reflection of growing desperation.

"This is the last step for him in a sense that this is a suicidal" move, Kolesnikov said. "If he's ready for the step, it means that we are witnessing a dictator who is even worse than Stalin."

	<p>Some observers have argued that NATO could strike Russia with conventional weapons if Putin presses the nuclear button.</p> <p>Belkovsky warned that Putin firmly believes that the U.S. and its allies wouldn't dare to strike back if Russia used a low-yield nuclear weapon in Ukraine.</p> <p>"If the U.S. believes that there is no psychologically readiness for that, it's mistaken," he said.</p> <p>Zygar compared the Russian leader to a fighter pilot who tries to win a dogfight by attacking the enemy head-on and waiting for him to turn away first.</p> <p>"He thinks he has the nerve, and he believes he must escalate to the end," Zygar said.</p> <p>He noted that pundits failed to predict Putin's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the current invasion just because they were using rational criteria.</p> <p>"Our past perceptions about rational limits all have proven false," he said. "There are no such limits."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Rochester custody death \$12M settlement
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/rochester-reaches-settlement-death-daniel-prude-police-custody/story?id=91111814
GIST	<p>The city of Rochester, New York, has reached a \$12 million settlement with the family of Daniel Prude, who died after he was restrained by police during a mental health emergency, the mayor announced Thursday.</p> <p>The settlement, believed by the family's attorneys to be the largest of its kind in Rochester history, will be paid to Prude's estate and comes more than two years after his death, which sparked calls for police reform.</p> <p>"Given the costs of continued litigation, this settlement was the best decision. It would have cost taxpayers even more to litigate, and would have placed a painful toll on our community," Rochester Mayor Malik Evans said in a statement. "It is now time to look forward so we may work together and focus our efforts on Rochester's future."</p> <p>Prude's son Nathaniel McFarland, the administrator of his father's estate, sued the city and six Rochester police officers in federal court, alleging wrongful death and civil rights violations. A federal judge approved the terms of the settlement Thursday. Beyond attorney fees, the settlement will go to Prude's five children, court records show.</p> <p>"Nothing can ever truly compensate me and my siblings for the killing of our father by the Rochester police," McFarland said in a statement. "Resolving this case is a step in the right direction. My family needs to heal, and communities need to know that there will be at least some accountability when police kill people like my dad, whose only crime was needing help."</p> <p>The case is believed to be the largest civil rights settlement in Rochester history, McFarland's attorneys said.</p> <p>"This settlement is a very large monetary recovery for a very serious fatal civil rights violation," the plaintiff's counsel, Matthew Piers, said in a statement. "No purely monetary settlement can truly address the fundamental problem of police violence that underlies this tragic case."</p> <p>Prude, a 41-year-old Black man, was restrained by Rochester police officers in March 2020 during a mental health emergency. His death a week later, of complications from asphyxia after he was taken off life support, was ruled a homicide by the Monroe County medical examiner.</p>

	<p>The incident became widely known six months later, after his family released body-worn camera footage that showed Prude appearing to go unconscious while he is being pinned to the ground with a spit bag on his head. The disturbing footage sparked protests and calls for reforms.</p> <p>Former Rochester Police Chief La'Ron Singletary was fired amid criticism over the handling of Prude's death, and the seven officers involved in the arrest were suspended.</p> <p>None of the Rochester Police officers involved in the incident were charged, after a grand jury voted not to indict them.</p> <p>An independent investigation into the city of Rochester's response to Prude's death determined that officials "suppressed" information and the former Rochester mayor lied about what she knew of the arrest during a press briefing.</p> <p>The delay in the release of the video resulted in the New York Attorney General's Office implementing a new policy in which body-camera footage will now be released earlier in the investigation process.</p> <p>Reforms made in Rochester in the wake of Prude's death included the creation of Person In Crisis teams and changing the city's Freedom of Information Law and body-worn camera processes.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Florida power restored to 2.1M after Ian
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/power-restored-21-million-florida-power-light-customers/story?id=91105904
GIST	<p>Power has been restored to more than 2.1 million customers as of Thursday morning in some of Florida's hardest-hit areas, a week after Hurricane Ian made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane, Florida Power & Light said. Less than 100,000 of its customers are still in the dark, the utility company reported.</p> <p>"In some of the hardest-hit areas, multiple specialized tree-trimming crews are needed to clear debris for every traditional line crew working to repair or, in some instances, rebuild infrastructure," FPL said in a statement.</p> <p>Crews have been working around the clock to restore power to customers and made a lot of progress overnight, Eric Silagy, FPL's Chairman and CEO, said during a press conference held in Fort Meyers.</p> <p>"Lots of destruction in the area, many buildings are unsafe and need to be inspected before they can actually have the power turned back on. Even when we have power in the area, you have to make sure that your home, your condominium building, your apartment building or your business can safely be restored," Silagy said.</p> <p>Sanibel Island remains inaccessible and FPL cannot turn the power back on in Fort Meyers Beach until search, rescue and recovery operations cease, according to Silagy.</p> <p>In a statement Silagy said that progress will "slow some" as FPL focuses on the hardest-hit areas.</p> <p>FPL expects to restore power to 95% of customers in the counties of Charlotte, DeSoto, Lee and Sarasota (south of Fruitville Road) by end of day Friday, except those who cannot safely accept service or who are still located in heavily-flooded area, the company said in a statement.</p> <p>A total of more than 186,000 customers remain in the dark in Florida, according to PowerOutage.us.</p> <p>The death toll from Ian continues to rise with at least 120 people, according to local officials. President Joe Biden visited Florida Wednesday to tour the damage and meet with local officials including Gov. Ron DeSantis.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Immigrant youth protest DACA court ruling
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/immigrant-youth-allies-rally-washington-appeals-courts-ruling/story?id=91104537
GIST	<p>More than 100 immigrant youth and allies rallied in front of Capitol Hill Thursday for a permanent pathway to citizenship for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipients, following a federal appeals court's ruling against the program's legality.</p> <p>A Fifth Circuit Court allowed DACA's protections to remain in place in a Wednesday decision, at least temporarily, while a lower court conducts further review in light of the Biden administration's recent efforts to codify the policy into administrative law.</p> <p>During the Thursday protest, around a dozen people, including several individuals on DACA, were arrested for blocking the street in front of Sen. Chuck Schumer's office.</p> <p>Luz Chavez, 21, the Maryland Youth Organizer at United We Dream and a DACA recipient who immigrated from Bolivia, said she joined the rally because she was tired of perpetually "feeling in limbo."</p> <p>"I came [to the U.S.] with my family," Chavez told ABC News. "We were escaping political violence that was happening in our country at the time. Living here is only the only place I've known. I started school here, and I started elementary school and went to college here."</p> <p>For many immigrant youth, DACA was a lifeline, allowing them to legally remain and work in the country.</p> <p>Before the program's inception in 2012, Cindy Kolade, 29, a DACA recipient who immigrated from the Ivory Coast, said she had to pay her school tuition out of pocket, unable to afford the cost of her education. "But when DACA came, I was able to get in-state tuition, which took a lot of burden for my family. With DACA I've been able to go to school," she told ABC News.</p> <p>During the pandemic, Kolade served as an essential health worker in a hospital's microbiology department. She is currently a clinical laboratory technician at MedStar Health and the University of Maryland.</p> <p>The potential discontinuation of DACA would have far-reaching consequences for young immigrants on the program, said Jose Coronado Flores, 25, a DACA recipient who immigrated from Guatemala when he was four years old.</p> <p>"It will mean that I can no longer work. It would mean that I will have no protection. I was blessed to go to Harvard and study Comparative Literature. I even have my own book," he told ABC News said. "To know that I won't even be able to legitimately work in the United States because of court ruling after a program that's been alive for 10 years, that's kind of crazy."</p> <p>"A lot of people that I know who are undocumented or have DACA, they have this escape plan. They know, if they had to get out of any situation, they could," he added. "And that's a scary thing to always have to think about."</p> <p>Kolade said it's this uncertainty surrounding her future that scares her the most.</p> <p>"At this point, I do not know, and that's where we are right now because it could mean that I will be deported or it can mean that I will lose everything that I've built here because this is my home," she said.</p> <p>Sergio Gonzales, executive director of the Immigration Hub, said political "punditry" surrounding DACA has obscured the human impact of the program's impending rescission, should the case reach the Supreme Court.</p>

	<p>"Republican leaders are using the same playbook with DACA that was used with abortion, which is to end the protections offered by DACA through an increasingly rightward shifting court," he said. "And we now are on the precipice of that actually happening."</p> <p>With the program being remanded back to Judge Andrew Hanen for review, immigration attorney Benjamin Osorio said he's personally optimistic the latest DACA regulations will hold but that it's time for a "clean DACA bill."</p> <p>"It's just very frustrating again, when I think there's a majority of Americans who side with... providing these kids some type of permanent protection and then they're being used as sort of a ping pong political pawn here," Osorio told ABC News.</p> <p>However, the fight for many DACA recipients is greater than the program itself.</p> <p>Against the backdrop of the upcoming midterm elections, Jossie Flor Sapunar, the communications director for CASA, an immigrant advocacy organization, said she hoped the protest would call attention to the urgency of creating a pathway to citizenship for all immigrants through legislative action.</p> <p>"Getting arrested in this country is putting your life on the line and putting your life in the hands of police officers," Sapunar said. "And so for someone with DACA to get arrested, it shows that they are willing to sacrifice everything that they have in the United States so that members of Congress can hear that citizenship is the only solution for people with that status."</p>
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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	10/05 Colombia govt. agency hit by cyberattack
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/colombia-national-food-and-drug-surveillance-institute-hit-with-cyberattack/
GIST	<p>Colombia's National Food and Drug Surveillance Institute (INVIMA) said it is dealing with a cyberattack that has disrupted operations at the agency.</p> <p>The organization said in a statement on Monday it has disabled its website, as well as connections to its servers while it investigates the attack. As of Wednesday, its website was still offline.</p> <p>"Thanks to the timely response of our technical team, it has been possible to verify that the information, privacy and confidentiality of the data that the entity manages are protected," the institute said in a statement on Monday.</p> <p>According to INVIMA, the systems used to manage the import authorization of vital medicines is currently unavailable.</p> <p>The regulatory authority was created in 1992, and operates within the country's Ministry of Health. It is in charge of inspecting and supervising the marketing and manufacturing of health products as well as issuing fines for health violations and the import of certain products.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the organization said it had created alternate methods for people to submit products for review.</p> <p>Several ransomware gangs and cybercriminal syndicates have targeted governments across Central and South America over the past year.</p> <p>The legislature of Argentina's capital city announced a ransomware attack on September 13 and Argentina's Judiciary of Córdoba was attacked by a ransomware group in August. Two weeks before that, Chile's</p>

cybersecurity incident response team said an unnamed government agency [was dealing with a ransomware attack](#) that targeted the organization's Microsoft tools and VMware ESXi servers.

The Dominican Republic, meanwhile, [announced that it was refusing to pay a ransom](#) following an attack on one of its departments on August 26.

Ransomware groups similarly [targeted](#) the Secretary of State for Finance of Rio de Janeiro in April and [crippled](#) the government of [Costa Rica](#) in May. There have also been [several other](#) rumored attacks on South American nations that were never confirmed.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Feds struggle to collaborate w/local govts
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/gao-feds-struggle-to-collaborate-when-ransomware-strikes-local-governments/
GIST	<p>When ransomware strikes local governments, officials usually call in the feds.</p> <p>But while federal agencies provide key support to state, local, and tribal governments hit with ransomware, their misalignment in some cases has hindered response efforts, according to a report released by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) this week.</p> <p>In one example highlighted in the report, an entity hit by a nation-state cyberattack called the FBI's 24-hour incident response number, but the call "went immediately to voicemail" and the agency never responded. The lack of response from the FBI — which is the agency responsible for investigating and assisting with nation-state attacks — hindered the locality's capacity to analyze the attack, GAO found.</p> <p>The watchdog agency recommended on Tuesday that the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), FBI, and Secret Service work to better communicate their responsibilities with each other and local governments who need their help.</p> <p>Such local governments reported more than 2,800 ransomware incidents to the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC) — a no-cost security cooperative run in partnership with CISA and the Center for Internet Security — from January 2017 through March 2021, per the report.</p> <p>But figuring out how to get help can be complicated.</p> <p>CISA, FBI, and the Secret Service "have not demonstrated that they jointly agreed on a process for making decisions when collaborating on ransomware assistance," the report said, adding this led to confusion and inconsistency. "Further, once another federal agency is involved, the decision making process between the two agencies remains unclear due to the lack of agreed upon incident handling procedures."</p> <p>GAO concluded that the three agencies "have not addressed aspects of six of seven key practices for interagency collaboration in their ransomware assistance to state, local, tribal, and territorial government."</p> <p>The watchdog agency conducted interviews with representatives from 6 national organizations related to state and local government operation and 13 state, local, tribal, and territorial governments as part of the investigation. All of the national organizations and 11 of the governments "reported difficulties identifying the federal prevention and response services that were available" for ransomware attacks.</p> <p>CISA, FBI, and Secret Service all collect and share information about ransomware threats facing local governments. In the event of an incident, CISA and MS-ISAC "provide technical assistance such as forensic analysis of the attack and recommended mitigations," while the FBI and Secret Service "primarily collect evidence to conduct criminal investigations and attribute attacks," per the GAO report.</p> <p>But not every local government victimized by ransomware knows how to access that help, or that it even exists.</p>

For example, “two public school districts that experienced a ransomware attack stated that they were not aware of resources available to them from the federal government,” according to the report.

Technical back-up

Despite these communication and collaboration problems, federal agencies provide important technical support to local governments facing ransomware attacks — especially for small agencies with little in-house expertise.

In one instance described in the report, a county with a single IT staffer lost control of its emergency services due to a ransomware attack, forcing it to reroute communications to a neighboring county.

“MS-ISAC’s assistance shortened the downtime and allowed the county to respond without paying the ransom or a contractor for recovery services,” the report noted.

In another incident involving ransomware affecting a county’s emergency services, local staff were able to respond quickly thanks to previous training and tips from CISA. The county then turned to the agency for assistance, and CISA “helped the county terminate the connection to isolate the attack, quickly analyzed the forensic data, and provided a complete report within several hours the day of the incident,” per GAO.

“The report is generally positive and, perhaps, more positive than such a report would’ve been several years ago,” Brett Callow, a threat analyst at Emsisoft who follows ransomware told The Record. “That said, it certainly seems there’s room for some improvement and hopefully the agencies will act on that,” he added.

In a letter responding to the report included as an appendix, the Department of Homeland Security — which houses CISA and the Secret Service — agreed with GAO’s recommendation that it improve collaboration among the three agencies. A representative from the Justice Department concurred with GAO’s recommendation for the FBI via email, per the report.

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HEADLINE	10/06 China state hackers more brazen
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/chinese-state-sponsored-hackers-more-brazen/
GIST	<p>Increasingly bold Chinese state-sponsored hackers are actively using known vulnerabilities to gain access to sensitive networks, a dynamic National Security Agency cyber chief Rob Joyce called a “major threat” to critical infrastructure and election security on Thursday.</p> <p>Joyce emphasized there is no specific, significant threat against U.S. elections but said the NSA, along with the FBI and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, decided to release an advisory on the topic to ensure extra vigilance as November’s elections loom.</p> <p>China has become “really brazen, doubling down on their activities to steal intellectual property and compromise sensitive networks,” Joyce told reporters Thursday. “They establish persistence and move laterally across the interconnected networks so malicious state sponsored activity is a major threat to U.S. critical infrastructure, election systems, national security systems and the Department of Defense along with the defense industrial base that we help protect.”</p> <p>The advisory is the fourth of its kind to be released since 2020. Joyce said officials decided to emphasize the known vulnerabilities now in part because NSA has noticed them being exploited recently by “actors of concern with sufficient capabilities to compromise and expand beyond the initial access to the vulnerable networks.”</p> <p>Joyce said the advisory is meant to put network owners on alert so they patch vulnerabilities as soon as possible. The advisory lists several known vulnerabilities that are being exploited by China, including Log4j, a vulnerability in a widely-used logging library that CISA Director Jen Easterly has said is one of the “most serious I’ve seen in my entire career.”</p>

	<p>Chinese hackers are targeting government and critical infrastructure networks with an “increasing array of new and adaptive techniques,” according to the advisory. Some of these techniques pose a significant risk to telecommunications providers and other information technology organizations in addition to the defense sector and critical infrastructure organizations.</p> <p>The advisory said that the hackers are targeting software and hardware companies to steal intellectual property and figure out how to access sensitive networks. The hackers use virtual private networks, the advisory said, to “obfuscate their activities and target web-facing applications to establish initial access.” Joyce said the private sector has been an invaluable partner to federal officials tracking the threat in part by helping to protect those who don’t patch.</p> <p>“Industry brings creative solutions to make sure these vulnerabilities are not liabilities at scale,” Joyce said.</p> <p>The NSA advisory comes a day after CISA and the FBI published a joint public service announcement that said malicious cyber activity intended to compromise election infrastructure is “unlikely” to result in large-scale disruptions or prevent voting.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Eternity Group new LilithBot malware
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/eternity-group-hackers-offering-new.html
GIST	<p>The threat actor behind the malware-as-a-service (MaaS) known as Eternity Group has been linked to new piece of malware called LilithBot.</p> <p>"It has advanced capabilities to be used as a miner, stealer, and a clipper along with its persistence mechanisms," Zscaler ThreatLabz researchers Shatak Jain and Aditya Sharma said in a Wednesday report.</p> <p>"The group has been continuously enhancing the malware, adding improvements such as anti-debug and anti-VM checks."</p> <p>Eternity Project came on the scene earlier this year, advertising its warez and product updates on a Telegram channel. The services provided include a stealer, miner, clipper, ransomware, USB worm, and a DDoS bot.</p> <p>LilithBot is the latest addition to this list. Like its counterparts, the multifunctional malware bot is sold on a subscription basis to other cybercriminals in return for a cryptocurrency payment.</p> <p>Upon a successful compromise, the information gathered through the bot – browser history, cookies, pictures, and screenshots – is compressed into a ZIP archive ("report.zip") and exfiltrated to a remote server.</p> <p>The development is a sign that the Eternity Project is actively expanding its malware arsenal, not to mention adopting sophisticated techniques to bypass detections.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Malicious version Advanced IP Scanner
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/network-security/backdoored-version-of-popular-network-admin-tool-hits-80-organizations-around-the-globe
GIST	<p>A false version of a popular tool used by network administrators to manage local area networks provides an attacker with backdoor access and has impacted at least 80 organizations around the world, according to new research from Kaspersky.</p>

[Software supply chain attacks](#) have become more common among cybercriminals in recent years, but in this case, researchers say it is rare to see a backdoored binary that is signed, which is the case with AdvancedIPSpyware. It's most likely that the certificate attackers used to sign the malware-laced version was stolen.

Kaspersky's Jornt van der Wiel noted in comments provided to SC Media that Advanced IP Scanner is typically used by large organizations to provide system administrators with an overview of their network, and security enthusiasts insight into operations of devices in their home network. "Because of anonymization, we cannot see what organizations have the backdoored version of this tool installed," he said. "However, given the target audience of Advanced IP Scanner, we believe with medium confidence that the target audience of the backdoored version is the same."

According to the report, the malware was hosted on two sites, whose domains are almost identical to the legitimate Advanced IP Scanner website, differing only by one the letter. The websites look the same, with the only difference being the 'free download' button on the malicious websites.

The report found the malicious version of the tool has infected more than 80 entities across a wide geographic footprint, including Western Europe, Latin America, Africa, South Asia, and countries within the Commonwealth of Independent States.

While researchers did not mention victims in North America, van der Wiel told SC Media that could be due to "limited visibility."

Indeed, John Shier, a senior security advisor for Sophos, told SC Media that Advanced IP Scanner is a popular tool for attackers and is also used within a substantial number of U.S.-based organizations.

"The primary use of this tool in our dataset was for network discovery, which we found in 21% of cases, compared to 12% in 2020. It was found in 23% of victims from the U.S," Shier noted in an email.

SC Media has reached out to Kaspersky for more details on the malware's victim set.

The report also noted that modular architecture is another distinctive feature of AdvancedIPSpyware. While it is typically associated with nation-state sponsored malware, the attacks were not targeted at any particular entity or industry in this case, which confirms that AdvancedIPSpyware is likely not related to a politically motivated campaign.

Specifically, Kaspersky experts found [three modules](#) that connect with one another via IPC — main module that updates or deletes itself, command execution model that involves typical spyware functionality, and network communication module that handles all network-related tasks.

In addition to its utility providing initial access to victim environments, Shier questioned whether the backdoored version could also potentially act as a criminal version of "corporate espionage."

"An unintended side effect would be that the criminals behind the backdoored version could now have access to the victims of other criminals unknowingly using the trojanized version," Shier said.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Lloyd's of London investigates 'incident'
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/insurance-giant-lloyds-london-investigating-cybersecurity-incident
GIST	<p>Insurance giant Lloyd's of London is investigating a cybersecurity incident that has forced it to disconnect some systems.</p> <p>The company says it has detected unusual activity and decided to 'reset' its network and systems as a precaution. It shut down all external connectivity, including its delegated authority platforms, in response to the incident.</p>

	<p>“Following the unusual activity detected on Lloyd’s network, our precautionary work to secure systems has been completed overnight,” a Lloyd’s spokesperson told <i>SecurityWeek</i> on Thursday.</p> <p>“Working with specialist partners and a dedicated team, we are currently evaluating the best options for reconnecting these systems. and we continue to investigate the issue. We continue to keep market participants and relevant parties updated,” the spokesperson added.</p> <p>The company has not shared any details, but the actions taken in response to the incident suggest that it may have been targeted in a ransomware attack.</p> <p>Lloyd’s would not be the first major insurance firm to be targeted by malicious hackers. Earlier this year, Pan-American Life Insurance Group (PALIG) was targeted by a ransomware group, and Aon also announced experiencing a cyber incident, but it told <i>SecurityWeek</i> at the time that it was not a ransomware attack.</p> <p>Lloyd’s announced recently that it will require its underwriters to include exclusion clauses for state-backed cyberattacks in future cyberinsurance policies.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 RDP attacks decline 89% in 8mo.
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/rdp-attacks-decline-89-in-eight/
GIST	<p>Detections of RDP password-guessing attacks declined from 123 billion in the first four months of the year to 13 billion in the period May–August, according to new data from ESET.</p> <p>The security vendor’s <i>Threat Report</i> series is compiled using telemetry from its products. Unusually, it analyzes the threat landscape over four-month periods, with this report covering T2 2022: May–August.</p> <p>It revealed an 89% decline in total RDP attack detections from T1 to T2 2022, and a 23% drop in unique clients reporting attacks over the period.</p> <p>Most of the attacks recorded were aimed at targets in Poland, the US and Spain, with Russian IPs accounting for most (31%) detections.</p> <p>ESET pointed to several drivers behind the decline in RDP compromise attempts, including changes in working patterns, which may mean remote connections are being used less, and defensive improvements.</p> <p>“The reasons for the decline remain the same as in T1: less remote work, better countermeasures implemented by security and IT departments, and Russia’s war with Ukraine, which seems to have impacted portions of the attacking infrastructure,” the report explained.</p> <p>“Another factor that might cause further drops in RDP attacks is the default protection in Windows 11 against brute-force attacks. However, its effects will probably become apparent only after more organizations have adopted the newest version of that operating system.”</p> <p>RDP is a top-three initial access vector for ransomware, so the news will be greeted with some relief by corporate IT security departments. However, it has come alongside a surge in attacks using vulnerability exploits.</p> <p>A Secureworks report out this week claimed that vulnerability exploitation accounted for 52% of ransomware incidents it investigated over the past 12 months, making it the number one initial access vector.</p> <p>However, ESET’s report claimed that password guessing still accounted for the largest number of network intrusions (41%) over the past four months, followed by exploitation of Log4j (13%).</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Top flaws exploited by Chinese hackers																																																																
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-govt-shares-top-flaws-exploited-by-chinese-hackers-since-2020/																																																																
GIST	<p>NSA, CISA, and the FBI revealed today the top security vulnerabilities most exploited by hackers backed by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to target government and critical infrastructure networks.</p> <p>The three federal agencies said in a joint advisory that Chinese-sponsored hackers are targeting U.S. and allied networks and tech companies to gain access to sensitive networks and steal intellectual property.</p> <p>"NSA, CISA, and FBI continue to assess PRC state-sponsored cyber activities as being one of the largest and most dynamic threats to U.S. government and civilian networks," the advisory says.</p> <p>"This joint CSA builds on previous NSA, CISA, and FBI reporting to inform federal and state, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) government; critical infrastructure, including the Defense Industrial Base Sector; and private sector organizations about notable trends and persistent tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs)."</p> <p>The advisory also bundles recommended mitigations for each of the security flaws most exploited by Chinese threat actors, as well as detection methods and vulnerable technologies to help defenders spot and block incoming attack attempts.</p> <p>The following security vulnerabilities have been the top most exploited by Chinese-backed state hackers since 2020, according to the NSA, CISA, and the FBI.</p> <table> <tr> <th>Vendor</th><th>CVE</th><th>Vulnerability Type</th></tr> <tr> <td>Apache Log4j</td><td>CVE-2021-44228</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>Pulse Connect Secure</td><td>CVE-2019-11510</td><td>Arbitrary File Read</td></tr> <tr> <td>GitLab CE/EE</td><td>CVE-2021-22205</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>Atlassian</td><td>CVE-2022-26134</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>Microsoft Exchange</td><td>CVE-2021-26855</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>F5 Big-IP</td><td>CVE-2020-5902</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>VMware vCenter Server</td><td>CVE-2021-22005</td><td>Arbitrary File Upload</td></tr> <tr> <td>Citrix ADC</td><td>CVE-2019-19781</td><td>Path Traversal</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cisco Hyperflex</td><td>CVE-2021-1497</td><td>Command Line Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>Buffalo WSR</td><td>CVE-2021-20090</td><td>Relative Path Traversal</td></tr> <tr> <td>Atlassian Confluence Server and Data Center</td><td>CVE-2021-26084</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>Hikvision Webserver</td><td>CVE-2021-36260</td><td>Command Injection</td></tr> <tr> <td>Sitecore XP</td><td>CVE-2021-42237</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>F5 Big-IP</td><td>CVE-2022-1388</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>Apache</td><td>CVE-2022-24112</td><td>Authentication Bypass by Spoofing</td></tr> <tr> <td>ZOHO</td><td>CVE-2021-40539</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>Microsoft</td><td>CVE-2021-26857</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>Microsoft</td><td>CVE-2021-26858</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>Microsoft</td><td>CVE-2021-27065</td><td>Remote Code Execution</td></tr> <tr> <td>Apache HTTP Server</td><td>CVE-2021-41773</td><td>Path Traversal</td></tr> </table> <p>Mitigation measures</p>		Vendor	CVE	Vulnerability Type	Apache Log4j	CVE-2021-44228	Remote Code Execution	Pulse Connect Secure	CVE-2019-11510	Arbitrary File Read	GitLab CE/EE	CVE-2021-22205	Remote Code Execution	Atlassian	CVE-2022-26134	Remote Code Execution	Microsoft Exchange	CVE-2021-26855	Remote Code Execution	F5 Big-IP	CVE-2020-5902	Remote Code Execution	VMware vCenter Server	CVE-2021-22005	Arbitrary File Upload	Citrix ADC	CVE-2019-19781	Path Traversal	Cisco Hyperflex	CVE-2021-1497	Command Line Execution	Buffalo WSR	CVE-2021-20090	Relative Path Traversal	Atlassian Confluence Server and Data Center	CVE-2021-26084	Remote Code Execution	Hikvision Webserver	CVE-2021-36260	Command Injection	Sitecore XP	CVE-2021-42237	Remote Code Execution	F5 Big-IP	CVE-2022-1388	Remote Code Execution	Apache	CVE-2022-24112	Authentication Bypass by Spoofing	ZOHO	CVE-2021-40539	Remote Code Execution	Microsoft	CVE-2021-26857	Remote Code Execution	Microsoft	CVE-2021-26858	Remote Code Execution	Microsoft	CVE-2021-27065	Remote Code Execution	Apache HTTP Server	CVE-2021-41773	Path Traversal
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Apache HTTP Server	CVE-2021-41773	Path Traversal																																																															

	<p>NSA, CISA, and FBI also urged U.S. and allied governments, critical infrastructure, and private sector orgs to apply the following mitigation measures to defend against Chinese-sponsored cyber-attacks.</p> <p>The three federal agencies advise organizations to apply security patches as soon as possible, use phishing-resistant multi-factor authentication (MFA) whenever possible, and replace end-of-life network infrastructure no longer receiving security patches.</p> <p>They also recommend moving towards the Zero Trust security model and enabling robust logging on internet-exposed services to detect attack attempts as soon as possible.</p> <p>Today's joint advisory follows two others that shared information on tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) used by Chinese-backed threat groups (in 2021) and publicly known vulnerabilities they exploit in attacks (in 2020).</p> <p>In June, they also revealed that Chinese state hackers had compromised major telecommunications companies and network service providers to steal credentials and harvest data.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the U.S. Government also issued an alert about state-backed hackers stealing data from U.S. defense contractors using a custom CovalentStealer malware and the Impacket framework.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 FBI: disinformation threats before elections
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fbi-warns-of-disinformation-threats-before-2022-midterm-elections/
GIST	<p>The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) warned today of foreign influence operations that might spread disinformation to affect the results of this year's midterm elections.</p> <p>The federal law enforcement agency warned that foreign actors are actively spreading election infrastructure disinformation to manipulate public opinion, discredit the electoral process, sow discord, and encourage a lack of trust in democratic processes and institutions.</p> <p>As the FBI added, foreign actors might also target the public with attempts to incite violence before and after the midterms.</p> <p>"Foreign actors may intensify efforts to influence outcomes of the 2022 midterm elections by circulating or amplifying reports of real or alleged malicious cyber activity on election infrastructure," the FBI said in a public service announcement jointly issued with CISA.</p> <p>"Additionally, these foreign actors may create and knowingly disseminate false claims and narratives regarding voter suppression, voter or ballot fraud, and other false information intended to undermine confidence in the election processes and influence public opinion of the elections' legitimacy."</p> <p>Disinformation campaigns could use various channels to spread and amplify false claims, including spoofed websites, fake social media personas, and dark web and publicly available media channels.</p> <p>These platforms could be used to spread claims that election infrastructure has been compromised, using "hacked" or "leaked" U.S. voter registration data likely to cast doubt on the election's legitimacy.</p> <p>"While some voter registration information is publicly available, the FBI and CISA have no information suggesting any cyber activity against U.S. election infrastructure has impacted the accuracy of voter registration information, prevented a registered voter from casting a ballot, or compromised the integrity of any ballots cast," the PSA says.</p>

These efforts by foreign actors aim to undermine voter confidence and to entice unwitting consumers of information and third-party individuals to like, discuss, share, and amplify the spread of false or misleading narratives. — FBI

Americans urged to use trusted sources only

The FBI and CISA urged voters to carefully evaluate their sources of information in the lead-up to and after the 2022 midterm elections and to only trust info from trusted sources, including reputable news outlets and election officials.

Two years ago, before the 2020 U.S. elections, the Director of the U.S. National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC) shared info on [election influence efforts](#) linked to China, Russia, and Iran.

This was followed by two PSAs regarding [spreading disinformation about the results of the 2020 U.S. elections](#) and detailing how attempts to compromise election infrastructure could [only slow down but not prevent voting efforts](#).

Influence operations remain the biggest threat to the election process, as shown by [another advisory issued this week](#) by the two federal agencies.

The FBI and CISA said cyber-attacks attempting to compromise election infrastructure are unlikely to affect election results and will not prevent or cause massive disruption of the voting process.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Phishing attack spoofs Zoom
SOURCE	https://www.techrepublic.com/article/phishing-spoofs-zoom-microsoft/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Phishing attacks work by impersonating a familiar or trusted brand, product or company, often with the goal of tricking recipients into divulging sensitive account credentials. That's exactly the case with a recent phishing campaign analyzed by security firm Armorblox in which the attacker spoofed Zoom in an attempt to compromise Microsoft user credentials.</p> <p>How the attack worked</p> <p>Aimed at more than 21,000 users at a national healthcare company, the phishing email included a subject line of "For [name of recipient] on Today, 2022" with each user's actual name listed as the recipient. Displaying the Zoom name and logo, the email itself claimed that the person had two messages waiting for their response. To read the alleged messages, the recipient had to click on a main button in the body of the message.</p> <p>The main button would have taken users to a phony landing page spoofing a Microsoft login site. At the site, the victims were instructed to enter their Microsoft account password supposedly to verify their identity before they could access the messages. The landing page already populated the username field with the person's actual email address to further lull them into a sense of security. Naturally, any Microsoft passwords entered at the page would then be captured by the attackers.</p> <p>Sent from a valid domain, the initial phishing email evaded Microsoft Exchange email security controls as it was able to pass the usual email authentication checks, including DomainKeys Identified Mail, Sender Policy Framework, and Domain-based Message Authentication Reporting and Conformance. Instead, the emails were blocked from reaching user inboxes by Armorblox security.</p> <p>This particular campaign used a variety of tricks to try to convince unsuspecting users of its legitimacy. The first tactic is social engineering. By claiming that two messages were waiting for a response, the email attempts to arouse curiosity and urgency on the part of the recipient. The next trick is impersonation. By spoofing a well-known brand such as Zoom and exploiting Microsoft as the linchpin for accessing the waiting messages, the campaign capitalizes on familiarity and trust.</p>

	By sending the email from a legitimate and trusted domain, the attackers took every effort to bypass security defenses. Further, the email was written in such a way as to not trigger any red flags, either with email security tools or with an unsuspecting recipient.
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HEADLINE	10/06 Binance: \$100M stolen in blockchain hack
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/binance-estimates-100-million-was-stolen-in-blockchain-hack-11665113138?mod=hp_lista_pos5
GIST	<p>Crypto exchange Binance said late Thursday that \$100 million was likely stolen as a result of a hack on its Binance Smart Chain blockchain network.</p> <p>Binance Smart Chain has temporarily suspended transactions and fund transfers, after detecting what it said was an exploit on a bridge between two blockchains.</p> <p>Changpeng Zhao, Binance's chief executive, said on Twitter that the issue involved BSC Token Hub, a so-called cross-chain bridge. These enable the transfer of digital assets and information from one independent blockchain to another.</p> <p>"The issue is contained now. Your funds are safe," Mr. Zhao wrote, apologizing for the inconvenience.</p> <p>A spokesman for Binance said initial estimates for funds taken off the Binance Smart Chain are between \$100 million and \$110 million.</p> <p>Binance Coin fell as much as 3.6% to \$285.93, according to CoinDesk data.</p> <p>Cross-chain bridge hacks have become a common occurrence. In August, attackers drained \$190 million worth of crypto from cross-chain bridge Nomad after a hacker exploited a vulnerability in an upgrade to the platform. So far this year, about \$2 billion in cryptocurrency has been stolen in cross-chain bridge hacks, according to blockchain data firm Chainalysis.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Hackers infiltrate Mexico defense ministry
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/06/world/americas/mexico-hack-government-military.html
GIST	<p>A major hack targeting Mexico's Defense Ministry has shed light on the country's most secretive and powerful institution, documenting its expanding influence over the civilian government, attempts to evade cooperation on a landmark human rights investigation and spying on journalists using the spyware known as Pegasus.</p> <p>Detailed in the data breach are the military's own internal probes and suspicions that powerful government officials, like state governors and the current interior minister, are linked to organized crime networks, including drug cartels.</p> <p>As journalists in Mexico search through the enormous hack, the information revealed in news articles so far has illuminated the military's growing hold over civilian institutions and its close relationship with President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.</p> <p>The Mexican military has a history of human rights abuses and massacres of civilians, and has long resisted oversight and accountability. The leaked emails show — in military officials' own words — how the institution maneuvers to sidestep the government, empower itself and protect its own members, however junior.</p> <p>The leaks were released by a hacker group known as Guacamaya, or macaw in Spanish, and include some six terabytes of data of over four million emails. In a manifesto released online, the hackers claimed they were an anti-imperialist group seeking to protect the environment. What country they operate from is unknown, but they communicated in Spanish.</p>

This week, Mr. López Obrador acknowledged the hack and said “there is nothing to hide.”

The military did not respond to requests for comment.

Despite warnings from politicians and analysts that the military is becoming too powerful under Mr. López Obrador, the senate voted this week to renew the military’s role as Mexico’s lead institution in charge of public security. The bill now heads to the president’s desk for his signature.

“Mexico’s armed forces are known as the least transparent institution, and these leaks come at a critical moment as the Mexican government is deepening the military’s involvement in civilian life and institutions,” said Stephanie Brewer, the Mexico director at the Washington Office of Latin America, a research institution.

The leaked emails reveal that the military was using Pegasus, an Israeli spyware, to infect the phones of journalists and an activist, despite Mr. López Obrador’s promises that his government would not use the malware to spy on Mexican citizens. [The New York Times first revealed](#) that the previous administration had used Pegasus to spy on journalists, activists and politicians, a scandal that rocked the government.

“The military’s power vis-à-vis institutions is a matter of great concern, as it is receiving more budgetary resources from the government,” Ms. Brewer said.

The military also launched investigations into and created files on current and former government officials and their links to organized crime and Mexico’s powerful drug cartels. The governor of the state of Veracruz, Cuitláhuac García, is reported to have links to a powerful cartel, an [accusation he denied this week](#).

In the hacked emails, Defense Ministry officials accuse the current Interior Minister, Adán Augusto López, of giving [top security positions to officials linked to organized crime](#) when he served as the governor of Tabasco state. A spokesman for the ministry declined to comment.

The leaks also reveal [widespread sexual assault](#) in the armed forces, with over 300 military personnel accused of harassment and other rights violations, which the top brass kept secret over the years.

Mr. López Obrador clinched a major legislative victory when the senate voted in September to move the National Guard — Mexico’s federal public security force — under the Defense Ministry’s control.

Shortly after Mr. López Obrador came to power, he [dissolved the Federal Police in 2019](#) and created the National Guard, which he promised would remain under civilian control. But this year he announced plans to [incorporate the National Guard into the military](#).

The expansion of the military’s power also came after a government truth commission in August [officially said the military was involved in the disappearance of 43 students](#) from a rural town called Ayotzinapa.

The email hack displayed for the first time the extent to which the military has used its power and connections to shield itself from oversight in the Ayotzinapa case.

An [email detailed an appeal from the current defense minister](#) to President López Obrador, pleading the innocence of a low-ranking captain who is a suspect in the students’ disappearance. The defense minister appeared to support the captain’s refusal to cooperate in the government probe.

Another [leaked email sent in 2015](#) also detailed a top general’s request to the defense minister at the time to “prevent excavations” inside the military barracks where some of the 43 students may have been taken. What ultimately happened to all the students is a mystery, but they are believed to be dead, the whereabouts of their bodies unknown.

“What the emails have made obvious is the military’s deliberate actions to avoid civilian oversight, even for a low-ranking captain,” said Cecilia Farfán Méndez, a Mexico security researcher at the University of California, San Diego. “They fear if they open the door and allow civilian oversight into one case, that it will open the flood gates in the future.”

The trove of hacked emails also details the military’s expansion into the economy.

Since coming to power in 2018, Mr. López Obrador has relied on the military to build most of his [giant infrastructure projects, totaling some \\$45 billion](#), and has announced plans to hand over their operation and revenue to the armed forces once they are completed.

The government has paid the armed forces to construct a nearly 1,000-mile railway, an [international airport](#) and an oil refinery, in contracts yet to be publicly released.

But the Defense Ministry’s business ambitions appear to be larger than previously known. The data breach revealed that the ministry plans to create a national tourism agency, with hotels, parks, museums and even a national airline that the armed forces would operate.

“The profits of that company will be used for pensions for members of the armed forces,” the president said this week, confirming the Defense Ministry’s move into the tourism sector. “It will protect the nation’s assets.”

The military’s growing power has unnerved many politicians and analysts, who warn that it could lead to more human rights abuses. Instead, they have called for the creation of a national police force overseen by the civilian government.

By expanding into the country’s economy, politicians and analysts say, the military could be further shielded from government oversight since it will no longer need to rely on elected officials to pass annual budgets to stay afloat.

Mexico has been a relatively stable nation for decades because of the civilian government’s ability to exert its control over the military, which allowed the country to avoid the army-led coups that roiled much of Latin America during that time.

But the military was given an outsized role in public security in 2006, under President Felipe Calderón, when he deployed the armed forces across the country to combat drug cartels. The military’s role and deployment was to be temporary, as Mr. Calderón’s administration established and developed Mexico’s first federal police force, which was supposed to eventually take over public security.

The Federal Police was established in 2010 and faced a rocky start, including accusations of human rights abuses and corruption. But, analysts say, the nascent force was slowly improving.

In 2019, Mr. López Obrador dissolved the Federal Police and created the National Guard, which will now be rolled into the military.

“While each administration has grappled with how to improve the police, the real concern with this administration is that they have abandoned the goal of developing a civilian public security force,” Ms. Farfán said.

“Instead, so much is being given to the military, and the militarization of Mexico is in full force.”

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HEADLINE	10/06 Judge: Facebook intentionally violated law
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/judge-facebook-intentionally-violated-wa-campaign-finance-law-822-times/

Meta, Facebook's parent company, intentionally violated Washington's longstanding campaign finance law 822 times, a King County Superior Court judge wrote Thursday, opening the social media giant up to millions of dollars in potential fines.

Washington's transparency law, originally passed by voters through an initiative in 1972, requires ad sellers such as Meta to disclose the names and addresses of political ad buyers, the targets of such ads and the total number of views of each ad. Ad sellers must provide the information to anyone who asks for it.

Other sellers of political ads, including television stations and newspapers, have had to abide by the Washington requirements for decades.

State Attorney General Bob Ferguson first sued Facebook for violating the law in 2018. In response, Facebook agreed to pay a fine and [said it would stop selling political ads](#) in the state, rather than comply with the law. Google, similarly, said it would stop selling political ads in Washington.

But [they didn't stop selling political ads](#).

Ferguson [sued Facebook again in 2020](#).

Meta had [tried to have the case thrown out](#) and Washington's campaign finance law declared unconstitutional, arguing it "unduly burdens political speech" and is "virtually impossible to fully comply with."

But King County Superior Court Judge Douglass North, who [last month denied Facebook's attempt to invalidate the law](#), spelled out the social media giant's offenses in a [written order Thursday](#).

"Meta not only continued to solicit Washington Political Advertisements, but Meta was aware that its announced 'ban' would not, and did not, stop all such advertising from continuing to be displayed on its platform," North wrote.

The company's violations were found intentional, North wrote, because of its history of failure to comply with the law, its extensive experience with campaign finance law and its "lack of good faith and failure to acknowledge and take responsibility for its violations."

Meta did not immediately respond to a request for comment Thursday.

The company had argued that it was impossible to comply with Washington's law, but "failed to provide evidence" as to why it was unable to comply, North wrote.

From 2019 to 2021, three people requested information from Meta about the political ads it was selling (even as it said it had stopped selling ads in Washington).

But Meta never provided these requesters with the information required by Washington law, North wrote. When it did provide information, it was insufficient, redacted or weeks or months late, North wrote.

Each Washington political ad that Meta sold and then failed to fully disclose required information to a requester is one violation of state law.

North found that from 2019 to 2021, Meta violated the law 822 times, in failing to sufficiently respond to the three requesters.

Each violation is typically punishable by a \$10,000 fine but since North found that Meta intentionally violated the law, the fines can be tripled.

That opens Meta up to a possible fine of nearly \$25 million.

	<p>Meta, one of the world's highest-valued companies, reported revenue of nearly \$29 billion in the second quarter of this year, and a quarterly profit of \$6.69 billion.</p> <p>North wrote that Meta would be assessed a civil penalty, but the amount would be determined at a later date.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Concerns: VMFH network outage continues
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/business/article266917606.html
GIST	<p>Concerns are growing over the source and possible ripple effect of a cyber event that's hobbled one of the Puget Sound area's main health systems and kept its online network down for four days straight.</p> <p>Computer systems with Virginia Mason Franciscan Health sites in the area remained down Thursday, the fourth day in a row following an "IT security incident" reported Monday involving its parent company CommonSpirit Health.</p> <p>The network's MyChart patient portal also remained inaccessible.</p> <p>The outage, affecting CommonSpirit sites in multiple states, has resulted in missed medical appointments, rescheduled surgeries, and kept patients and staff from accessing medical records, among other issues.</p> <p>Employees and patients have told The News Tribune this week that staff have turned to paper charting and hand-written prescriptions in some cases. Other patients have reported inability to get prescriptions refilled or get appointments rescheduled.</p> <p>While speculation has grown among outside observers that the health system was hit with a ransomware attack, no real details about the incident itself were forthcoming from either VMFH or CommonSpirit Health.</p> <p>On Wednesday, CommonSpirit Health updated its website with the following statement: "CommonSpirit Health has identified an IT security issue that is impacting some of our facilities. We have taken certain systems offline. We are continuing to investigate this issue and follow existing protocols for system outages."</p> <p>On Thursday, VMFH issued its first social media post about the events since the outage's start, saying, "VMFHealth's parent company CommonSpirit Health is managing an IT issue impacting some of its facilities. While parts of VMFHealth are impacted, Virginia Mason Medical Center is not. We take our responsibility to our patients very seriously and apologize for any inconvenience."</p> <p>The chief information officer of another local health system told The News Tribune on Thursday he'd been in touch with a VMFH cybersecurity official and did not learn any specifics of what they are facing.</p> <p>"They were not forthright in telling us what exactly is going on," said Keith Stauffer, CIO with Peninsula Community Health Services.</p> <p>Stauffer's own network briefly went down Thursday, but he said that was part of a planned reboot.</p> <p>As for VMFH outage, "I know that they're addressing the issue. We just wanted to make sure that there was nothing that from our side we needed to be apprised of," he said, "or if there was anything that we needed to take precautionary measures for, because we do access their system from our system."</p> <p>Cyber security analyst Robert Siciliano is CEO of ProtectNowLLC.com. He told The News Tribune via email Thursday morning that the VMFH/CommonSpirit Health outage was "likely a ransomware attack."</p>

Worries of a possible cyberattack spreading, Stauffer said, is top of mind for medical partners with VMFH. Stauffer said as of Thursday, “Everything is OK on our side. We’re just keeping a close eye on (VMFH outage) as well.”

Brett Callow, a cyber threat analyst at the cybersecurity company Emsisoft, told The Washington Post on Thursday, “The scope is perhaps unprecedented in terms of the health-care sector.”

CommonSpirit, he added, is “absolutely massive.”

CommonSpirit Health has become one of the largest nonprofit health systems in the United States, with more than 1,000 care sites in 21 states, serving 20 million patients, according to its website.

VMFH hospitals in the Puget Sound area include St. Clare in Lakewood; St. Joseph and CHI Franciscan Rehabilitation Hospital, both in Tacoma; St. Elizabeth in Enumclaw; St. Anthony in Gig Harbor; St. Michael in Silverdale; Virginia Mason Hospital and Seattle Medical Center in Seattle; St. Anne in Burien; and St. Francis in Federal Way.

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HEADLINE	10/06 ‘Killnet’ hackers target multiple state govts
SOURCE	https://statescoop.com/russia-ukraine-killnet-ddos-state-governments/
GIST	<p>A group of Russian-speaking hackers on Wednesday took responsibility for a denial-of-service attack targeting state government websites, with several states experiencing brief or lengthy outages.</p> <p>The group, which calls itself Killnet, appears to have temporarily disabled websites run by the governments of Colorado, Connecticut, Kentucky, Mississippi and Missouri. Images being shared on the group’s Telegram channel show a target list including sites run by dozens of U.S. state governments. Most of the sites affected Wednesday appeared to be stable Thursday morning, though Colorado’s main website is still replaced by a temporary site as officials work to restore access. (The temporary site contains links to Colorado’s other digital services, which were not affected by the DDoS campaign.)</p> <p>Colorado officials said Wednesday that the state’s homepage was “taken offline due to a cyberattack claimed by an anonymous suspected foreign actor,” though they declined to comment further on the incident’s connection to Killnet’s threat.</p> <p>“The Governor’s Office of Information Technology and State Emergency Operations Center are actively working with state and federal partners to restore access to the Colorado.gov Portal homepage,” officials said. “Security measures are also being taken to ensure that state websites and services remain unaffected.” The state does not have an estimate for when the main site will be restored.</p> <p>Another site that was briefly downed Wednesday was the Kentucky Board of Elections, which features information about voter registration, candidate resources and polling places, though the site is not involved in the actual voting process.</p> <p>According to an Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center email reported by CNN, Killnet’s operation “does not appear to specifically target U.S. elections infrastructure, though election-related websites can be indirectly or directly impacted through the broader operation.”</p> <p>Killnet emerged shortly after Russia’s late-February invasion of Ukraine and set about targeting websites operated out of countries that have been supporting the Ukrainian defense, including Norway and Lithuania. The group also attempted to disrupt the Eurovision Song Contest — which excluded Russia — but was thwarted by cyber authorities in host nation Italy.</p> <p>The group’s also targeted U.S. websites before, including that of Bradley International Airport in Hartford, Connecticut, as well as Congress.gov, which was briefly taken down in July.</p>

	<p>The group is dubbing this week’s operation “USA Offline.” Since early Wednesday, the group’s members have been posting a list of state-government websites, preceded by an image showing a mushroom cloud behind the Statue of Liberty with the caption “Fuck NATO.” Telegram posts suggest the group intends to attempt to disrupt sites for 72 hours.</p> <p>But the hacktivist group is considered more of an obnoxious, attention-seeking nuisance than an advanced cyber threat. While the group runs a Telegram channel with nearly 93,000 subscribers — who trade pro-Kremlin propaganda and crude jokes about Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky — it is considered relatively easy to block.</p> <p>“Killnet seems to be a semi-structured organization with effective communication,” reads an analysis of the group published by the cybersecurity firm Forescout. “Although they have managed some level of success in their campaigns, there is no evidence that they use or develop custom tools or even that they reuse very sophisticated tools in their attacks.”</p> <p>The analysis recommended patching internet-connected devices and increasing monitoring of network traffic on those devices.</p> <p>Killnet was also one of several groups included in a Five Eyes alert earlier this year warning of Russian state-sponsored and criminal threats, including DDoS attacks against critical infrastructure.</p>
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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	10/06 Nearly half of world terror victims African
SOURCE	https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1129312
GIST	<p>UNODC chief Ghada Waly said there were around 3,500 victims of terrorist acts in sub-Saharan Africa last year, nearly half of those recorded worldwide.</p> <p>The vast Sahel region in particular has become home to some of the most active and deadly terrorist groups, and it is essential to gain more understanding of the links between organised crime and terrorism, through rigorous data collection, she added.</p> <p>The evidence is there that the illegal exploitation of precious metals and minerals such as gold, silver and diamonds, are fuelling the extremists with significant sources of income, and benefitting the groups that control extraction, and trafficking routes.</p> <p>She said based on UNODC research, “we have established that illegally mined gold and other precious metals are being fed into the legitimate market, providing huge profits for traffickers.”</p> <p>Wildlife trafficking has also been reported as a possible source of funding for militias, she added, with the illegal trade in ivory alone generating \$400 million in illicit income each year.</p> <p>Millions exploited</p> <p>With a population of around 1.3 billion, almost 500 million Africans were living in extreme poverty during 2021, she told ambassadors.</p> <p>“This criminal exploitation strips the people of Africa of a significant source of revenue. It robs the millions of people who depend on these natural resources for their livelihoods. And it fuels conflicts and exacerbates instability.”</p> <p>The climate emergency and the COVID-19 pandemic have also wreaked havoc on already fragile economies across Africa, and illicit trafficking only serves to further jeopardize development and wind back progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.</p>

She said sustainable development would be impossible without peace and stability for the continent, noting that UNODC is “the guardian” of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the main international bulwark against the black marketeers.

Battling the networks

“We support member countries to put in place the policies, legislation, and operational responses required to better address terrorist threats...In 2021 alone, we implemented **25 counter-terrorism projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, with over 160 activities delivered**, and trained 2,500 people.”

She told the meeting that in the Sahel today, the UN training workshops are being organized with The [UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute](#), to strengthen the understanding and skills of criminal justice officials to work across agencies, share intelligence, and “**bring down terrorist networks and those who fund them.**”

UNODC also supports ten countries across the Sub-Saharan region to improve their frameworks to counter terrorist financing and money laundering – including in the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Niger, and Somalia.

Ms. Waly said UNODC was also working to strengthen inter-agency coordination among intelligence services, law enforcement, financial intelligence units and prosecutors.

She said that conflict zones in Africa were being disproportionately affected by illegal mining and trafficking in precious metals.

“**Mineral supply chains are often linked to child abuse, human trafficking, forced labour and other human rights violations.** With 60 percent of Africa’s population under 25 years of age, young people are both the future of the continent but also its most vulnerable citizens.”

But she said once empowered, young people can become powerful change agents: “They can **create a better future and advocate on behalf of themselves** and their communities and protect their natural resources.”

Empowering youth

Ms. Waly said she was especially proud of UNODC’s youth-driven, Peace-building project, which in partnership with [UNESCO](#), empowers young people to become ‘weavers of peace’ in the cross-border regions of Gabon, Cameroon, and Chad.

The aim, she said, was to create a network of 1,800 young “weavers of peace”. To enable them to become actors in conflict prevention and peace-building in cross-border regions, and identify alternative ways of making a living for those in vulnerable cross-border communities.

Defund the terrorists

“**UNODC remains fully engaged to support Africa’s fight against the criminal trade in wildlife and natural resources**”, she assured ambassadors, adding that she welcomed the engagement of the Council, “to the growing concerns that these illicit revenues are financing terrorist activities and armed groups.”

She said the UN’s crime fighting effort was ready to assist all African in securing their “right to peace, stability, justice and prosperity - for today and future generations. Leaving no money for terrorists. Leaving no one behind.”

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HEADLINE	10/06 Extremism experts: it's about to get worse
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/bvm5nw/extremist-experts-say-things-could-be-about-to-get-a-whole-lot-worse

In [early 2020](#), ASIO director general Mike Burgess released a statement detailing the current state of extremist groups in Australia. Neo-nazis, he said, were presenting an increasingly challenging security risk.

“The character of terrorism will continue to evolve and we believe that it will take on a more dispersed and diversified face,” he said.

“In Australia, the extreme right-wing threat is real and it is growing.”

This year, Mike Burgess returned for his 2022 report with a key finding: the internet, especially over the pandemic, had exacerbated radicalisation even more, especially to a cohort of younger men.

“The number of minors being radicalised is getting higher, and the age of the minors being radicalised is getting lower.”

“A few years ago, minors represented around two to three per cent of our new counter-terrorism investigations. In the last year, the figure’s been closer to 15%. Perhaps more disturbingly, these young people are more intense in their extremism.”

Since 2013, \$69 million dollars has been pumped into programs to counter extremist groups in Australia, and last year the Morrison Government instigated new powers for police in the *Counter-Terrorism Amendment Bill*. At the end of 2021, the [Australian Government](#) had 27 terrorist organisations listed under the criminal code. That included the entirety of the Lebanon based Shia terrorist group, Hizballah, and the newly added neo-nazi group, The Base.

Yet discussion around the increase of extremist activity has existed, and has been getting louder, for the last decade. From the rise of [internet-born incels](#), to violent pockets of right-wing extremists in the West, to threats in the Middle East – it’s a global problem rather than one designated to any particular culture or geographical location.

As our population grows and our views grow evermore polarising, what is the future of extremism? Who is the most vulnerable to it? And how can we counteract it?

VICE talked to two experts in search of answers.

Arie Kruglanski is a heavy hitter in the world of terrorism and extremism and is currently a Professor of Psychology at The University of Maryland. He’s attributed to creating the 3N model of radicalization which includes “need, narrative and network” as the base ingredients to extremism. The second is Steve Barracosa, Senior Manager at the Countering Violent Extremism Unit for Youth Justice in New South Wales, Australia.

We spent time with both Arie and Steve, asking questions about the current state of extremism and where it’s heading in the future.

WHAT MOTIVATIONS CAUSE EXTREMISM?

Arie Kruglanski: We find that the motivation is the quest for significance and dignity. So, especially when people feel that they were humiliated, or their group was discriminated against or they feel that they were diminished, that they lost dignity, lost significance, they need to regain that significance. That becomes the underlying motivation.

The maintenance of significance, or the attainment of significance, is then allowed through a narrative that a given group peddles. For example, *you will be significant if you fight for your country, or the immigrants are the enemy and you've got to find them*. And if you do that, you're going to be important. So there is a narrative supported by a network that allows people to satisfy their motivation for significance. And the motivation for significance is, in most cases, their underlying motivation to do extreme things.

I think from a psychological perspective, radicalisation and extremism have a broad definition.

The psychology of extremists is being able to do something while suppressing everything else, or having a one track mind. It's being ready to sacrifice your life, your family, your career, for that one thing. Very often these behaviours are very rare in society, because it's very difficult to suppress all your needs, so very few people in general are capable of extremism.

OF COURSE THE INTERNET HAS A ROLE.

Ari Kruglanski: The internet allows you to find a network that will accept you, no matter what your views, no matter how crazy the narrative. You'll find chat rooms and echo chambers that will allow you to express these views and belong to that network. In the past, to find people who would support an extreme narrative, it would be difficult – because most people around you will be moderate.

Now, with social media, you can find them very easily. Social media has emphasised the idea of social worlds, how many friends you have, how many likes you get, so that idea of becoming socially worthy has been propagated by social media. And it encourages people to find groups or ideological groups that tell you how to become significant or how to have social worth.

Steve Barracosa: There's no way of hiding from the fact that the internet is the domain of younger generations, they're the most proficient users of the internet. The internet without question is a really pronounced factor.

From social networking, social media and other online and digital platforms, it's a big part of all of our lives. So it's not surprising that extremist group's movements have embedded their ideas and their messages in those domains. And we're talking about things like the way that they're packaging up extremist materials and propaganda materials and using a lot of youth subculture. So things like video games, or cartoon images.

WHAT'S AUSTRALIA DOING ABOUT IT?

Steve Barracosa: The New South Wales government, in partnership with the Commonwealth and in partnership with all states and territories in Australia, have worked towards designing information packages and training platforms that are really geared towards supporting people to understand what some early indicators might look like. When it comes to youth justice all young people will have their own individual journeys towards extremism.

Vulnerability is really our baseline in understanding what the soft spots are. What are the weak spots in young people that might leave them open to being exposed to something extreme and influenced by something extreme? And how can we flip them around and turn those vulnerabilities into strengths and protective factors and safeguard against the exposure of extreme materials or individuals' consumption of extreme messages. But all young people are vulnerable in different ways.

There's no one size fits all approach. And if you jump from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, there'll be nuances that reflect different environments. Tailored approaches tend to be the go-to go.

HOW CAN EXTREMIST TENDENCIES BE REVERSED?

Arie Kruglanski: There are large societal forces at work that a lone psychologist would be powerless to reverse. What needs to happen is that a person has to find an alternative way of satisfying their significance. And an alternative network to belong to reinforces that.

We have done research with the German neo-Nazis and we looked at people who left. Very often they left because they struck up a relationship with somebody in the mainstream, they became friends, or they

became romantically involved with somebody outside of their group. And that social connection drew them away from the extreme network to a moderate network and that's how they became deradicalised.

We have studied the terrorists from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka. They were radicalised systematically in detention camps for years and that was unsuccessful because the war was won by the Sri Lankan military. Violent extremism was no longer an option on the table. But then, alternative ways of being significant were provided to them. They gave them vocational education. They tried to find them jobs or immerse them in networks that would support moderation.

It's a societal issue. We believe what other people, whom we respect, believe. So it's very difficult for just a psychologist to deradicalise a person, it has to be a much broader societal effort.

IS EXTREMISM ON THE RISE?

Arie Kruglanski: I think it has increased tremendously. There were several things that affected the world in the last several decades. There was globalisation that left millions of people behind, feeling that they were forgotten or abandoned. There was the financial crisis of 2007-2009, from which the recovery was very slow. Then there was a pandemic, of course. Before that was the immigration crisis. By now we have 100 million displaced people in the world. And the number is growing because of climatic events or climate change. All of that introduces a great deal of uncertainty in people's minds, and uncertainty, or a diminished sense of significance and empowerment, makes people want to regain their sense of power.

Animal Rights Extremists: Terrorism or Protest?

And that is provided by radical ideologies, populist ideology, ideologies that identify somebody responsible, some culprit. Be it the elites, be it the immigrants, be it people of colour, be it Jewish people, (or for conspiracy theorists) reptiles. And these populist ideologies are satisfying people's sense of significance. For example, "Make America Great Again".

These ideologies lead to vulnerability to authoritarian leaders who speak with one voice and who do not tolerate dissent and disagreement. There is a process in the world today toward greater autocracy and a retreat of democracy because of these uncertainties and instabilities that have swept the world. So, Trump in the U.S., Marine LePen in France, and on and on. These autocratic leaders try to get significance, and they promise significance to their followers, and they become very competitive. So there is an interesting intensification of international competition that can lead to armed conflicts. So I think the world is at a very dangerous inflection point, because of the psychology of it all.

STEVE BARRACOSA: The reality is, we're at a point in time, where I think it's broadly accepted across much of the Western world that young people are engaging in extremism in different ways, but in larger numbers than ever before.

Extreme groups and movements are, I guess, more aggressively and more effectively targeting young people than we've maybe previously seen. There's real intent from extreme groups and movements to get the attention of youth and to inspire youth to be interested in their messaging. And, as a result, I suppose the reality we're seeing in Australian youth, in particular, is them engaging in different extreme ideas and behaviours than we might have seen previously. I think what comes next is just increased complexity.

Certainly in New South Wales, and I think we can say other states and territories in the Commonwealth level as well, we saw evidence of youth being engaged in religious extremism in recent years. When you throw in a global pandemic, where all of us spent extended periods of time isolated, often at home and for prolonged periods online, I suppose youth became a cohort that was particularly pronounced.

THE FUTURE OF EXTREMISM

Arie Kruglanski: There'll be a retreat of democracy. Democracy speaks with many voices, and therefore, there is no "one" voice. It's the one thing that extremism needs; that would demand the sacrifice of everything that democracy offers; plurality, multiculturalism and diversity. There may be more of a focus

	<p>on nationalism that creates the readiness to sacrifice all and to die for your country. And that is the recipe for wars.</p> <p>So I think that it could become worse. I think we're going in a direction that autocratic regimes may arise, and extremists are going to cultivate it. There's also a prediction that by the year 2050 there'll be a billion displaced people because of climatic events. And that kind of number is going to exert tremendous pressures on host countries around the world. And that, in turn, can lead to further radicalisation. So we're living in interesting times.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 US: ISIS infiltrated refugee camp to recruit
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/isis-syria-al-hol-camp-population-reduced-biden-administration-plan-rcna50877
GIST	<p>The Biden administration has enacted a new plan to reduce the population of a sprawling refugee camp near the Iraq-Syria border that has become a haven for the Islamic State terrorist group to recruit members, plot a comeback and carry out some of its most brutal tactics — including the torture and sexual abuse of women and girls — according to five senior administration officials.</p> <p>The core of the administration's effort is to work with other countries to repatriate refugees from the al-Hol camp in rural Syria. The administration's main focus is on Iraq, according to a U.S. military official and a Biden administration official. Six European countries and Australia have so far agreed to transport dozens of their citizens being held at the camp back to their homelands in the coming weeks, those officials said.</p> <p>The Australian government, for instance, is already working to repatriate dozens of Australian citizens, mainly women and children related to ISIS fighters who are dead or in jail in Syria, the officials said.</p> <p>Jason Koutsoukis, the senior media adviser for Australian Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil, did not confirm the plans.</p> <p>"The government's overriding priority is the protection of Australians and Australia's national interests, informed by national security advice," he said by email. "Given the sensitive nature of the matters involved, it would not be appropriate to comment further."</p> <p>The Biden administration is offering other countries support for repatriating their citizens, the five officials said, including helping verify their identities, providing advice about rehabilitation options, talking through legal challenges and offering logistical support, such as transporting al-Hol residents out of northeast Syria on U.S. military aircraft.</p> <p>The refugee camp, opened in 1991 during the first Gulf War, has exploded into a humanitarian disaster and a serious international terrorism threat. Biden administration officials told NBC News they have been alarmed by the speed with which the camp has grown to include tens of thousands of relatives of suspected ISIS members and become a breeding ground for people loyal to ISIS.</p> <p>The camp's population lives in ragged white tents, facing punishing desert heat and frigid cold at night. They have poor sanitation and limited access to running water. Children, who are the majority of the residents, receive very little schooling, according to aid organizations like Save the Children. Parts of the camp are impossible to control, and ISIS, with the help of thousands of women still thought to be loyal to the group, is recruiting new fighters by offering residents basic services or forcibly enlisting them with threats and violence, according to the U.S. military.</p> <p>"This place is a literal breeding ground for the next generation of ISIS," Army Gen. Michael "Erik" Kurilla, the commander of U.S. Central Command, said in a statement after having recently visited al-Hol. "ISIS seeks to exploit these horrific conditions."</p>

The growing terrorism threat poses a political problem for President Joe Biden, threatening to undermine his vow not to allow ISIS to reconstitute. Biden has insisted the U.S. can continue to effectively fight terrorism despite an increasingly shrinking troop presence overseas, pointing to two operations this year: a raid by U.S. special forces in northwestern Syria that led to the death of ISIS' top leader and a [drone strike in Afghanistan that killed the head of Al Qaeda](#).

The situation at al-Hol threatens to undermine all of that.

"It's a complex problem. There are humanitarian elements to it, but there's a security element, as well," a senior administration official said. "We are trying to look for creative approaches and new energy and resources to get at this same problem that has been evolving over the last few years."

In the past three years, al-Hol has grown from 10,000 to roughly 57,000 residents, about 90% of them women and children, according to the U.S. government. About 40,000 of the children are under age 12, the government data says, and at least 80 babies are born there every month. And about 8,000 of the women are "jihadists and wives and widows of ISIS fighters" who have organized their own "religious police units," the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace recently [reported](#).

A recent nearly three-week operation at al-Hol — conducted by the Syrian Democratic Forces, with the U.S. military providing intelligence and surveillance — found women and girls who were chained, tortured and sexually abused, [according to the U.S. military](#). A [Yazidi girl](#) found inside a tent had been held captive by ISIS for eight years, routinely raped and sold as a slave since she was taken from her family in Iraq when she was 9.

The operation led by the Syrian Democratic Forces, which are nominally in charge of the camp, resulted in the arrests of hundreds of ISIS fighters and the discovery of dozens of tunnels where the group's operatives had stored weapons and supplies, including more than 50 pounds of explosives.

Administration officials are particularly worried that the tens of thousands of children at al-Hol are especially vulnerable to being recruited by ISIS or forced to join.

"We're really concerned that al-Hol is deeply tied to one of our primary objectives for all of Syria, which is to prevent the resurgence of ISIS," the senior administration official said.

U.S. officials have said that there is no military solution to al-Hol and that instead they are trying to stop the growth of ISIS through diplomatic outreach. Officials at the State Department, the National Security Council and the Defense Department are working on the plan, which also includes improving living conditions for those who cannot leave.

The U.S. is adding the issue to diplomatic and military engagements, the five administration officials said, including asking every country with citizens at al-Hol what the hurdles are to repatriating them.

"The United States supports and applauds recent repatriations," a spokesperson for the NSC said in a statement. "Our effort to encourage repatriations and offer support is ongoing."

The NSC spokesperson deferred to the countries that have agreed to repatriate their citizens for comment on their efforts.

The camp's size and makeup dramatically changed in March 2019, when the Syrian Democratic Forces defeated ISIS fighters at [Baghouz](#), Syria. The battle there was seen as ISIS' last stand, and ISIS' defeat marked the fall of its self-proclaimed caliphate.

Many ISIS fighters were killed, but some of them, as well as their family members and sympathizers, fled to al-Hol. Within weeks after the fall of Baghouz, the population at al-Hol had doubled to more than 20,000.

It has continued to grow. Today, al-Hol includes multiple enclaves, including a separate space for women and children of ISIS fighters.

One of the issues plaguing the Biden administration, as it did the Trump administration, is that officials do not have clarity about who precisely is at al-Hol. Residents do not have to declare their nationalities, so estimates are rough and difficult to verify. Further complicating matters, some residents lie to be repatriated somewhere other than their home countries.

Of the roughly 57,000 residents there now, U.S. officials say, an estimated 28,000 are from Iraq and 18,000 are from Syria. They say about 10,000 more residents of al-Hol are foreign-born, neither Syrian nor Iraqi.

The U.S. has made efforts to repatriate all its citizens in the camp, but some countries have been reluctant to do the same despite years of U.S. efforts to persuade them. Many of them do not have passports or other documentation to prove their citizenship, and foreign governments are concerned they could be ISIS sympathizers or, worse, former fighters who could pose threats inside their countries.

“Most of the residents can and should be rehabilitated and returned to society. Just like all people, they wish to contribute to society and raise their families in peace,” Kurilla said in a statement. “Most of them reject and fear ISIS. Most wish to return safely to their homelands, to reenter the workforce and return their children to school.”

Administration officials want to reduce the population at al-Hol to a manageable level that humanitarian aid groups and trained guards can handle. The officials would not put a specific number on the ideal population size, referring to when the camp held 5,600 to 10,000 residents.

Iraq has become the administration’s top priority for achieving that goal — nearly half of the residents at al-Hol are Iraqi citizens.

Biden administration officials contend that if the government in Baghdad took back all Iraqi citizens at al-Hol, the problem would be far more manageable. The Iraqi government is working to repatriate several thousand of them, about 150 families; at that pace, it could take up to seven years for all the Iraqi citizens at al-Hol to return home.

Top U.S. diplomats and military officials are asking the Iraqis to speed up their efforts. But the Iraqi government has pointed out that some al-Hol residents cannot return to where they came from in Iraq, so resettlement is not as easy as it might seem.

The next largest population at al-Hol is even more complex — Syrian citizens who fled not just ISIS but also Syria’s Assad regime. They still cannot return home because the areas they are from are controlled by the government or because they would be viewed as ISIS sympathizers.

Without any other country to go to, the Syrian population could remain in the camp the longest, administration officials say.

The Syrian Democratic Forces, meanwhile, are enhancing security since the clearing operation this month, according to the U.S. military. They have added fencing and more surveillance. But U.S. officials are concerned that the Syrian Democratic Forces’ attention could get pulled elsewhere given the continued fight against ISIS outside al-Hol and the threat they are under from Turkish forces.

Syrian Democratic Forces officials did not respond to requests for comment on the humanitarian and security situation in the camp.

The U.S. is also urging countries to help address the deteriorating living and security conditions.

	“Our intent is to try to see if we can reinvigorate our efforts and also look to see if there are some other approaches that perhaps we may have missed,” a senior administration official said.
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HEADLINE	10/06 US operations Syria kill 3 senior IS leaders
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/us-raid-syria-kills-islamic-state-insurgent-captures-91121006
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- U.S. forces killed three senior Islamic State leaders in two separate military operations in Syria Thursday, including a rare ground raid in a portion of the northeast that is controlled by the Syrian regime, U.S. officials said.</p> <p>According to officials, U.S. special operations forces conducted a raid near the village of Qamishli, killing IS insurgent Rakkan Wahid al Shamman, wounding another and capturing two others.</p> <p>Later Thursday, the U.S. conducted an airstrike in northern Syria, killing Abu Ala, the No. 2 Islamic State leader in Syria, and Abu Mu'ad al Qahtani, another IS leader, officials said.</p> <p>A U.S. official said a small number of U.S. troops were on the ground near Qamishli for less than an hour to conduct the ground raid. The U.S. doesn't often do missions on territory that is under the control of Syrian President Bashar Assad. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details of the raid.</p> <p>In a statement, U.S. Central Command said al Shamman was known to facilitate the smuggling of weapons and fighters in support of Islamic State operations. According to the statement, no civilians or U.S. troops or were killed or injured in the raid.</p> <p>Additional information about the airstrike was not provided.</p> <p>The U.S. continues to have about 900 forces in Syria to advise and assist Syrian Democratic Forces in the fight against the Islamic State group.</p> <p>One U.S. official said that, for the first time in a long time, the U.S. did not use its deconfliction phone line with Russia to notify them of the U.S. troop raid and presence there. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details, said the lack of deconfliction was more the result of operational security and not a reaction to Russia's war on Ukraine.</p> <p>The U.S. and Russia have used the deconfliction line to avoid any possible accidents or incidents when U.S. forces are in the northeastern region of Syria where Russian forces also operate.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	10/06 Easter Island fire damages moai statues
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/07/easter-island-fire-causes-irreparable-damage-to-famous-moai-statues
GIST	<p>A forest fire that tore through part of Easter Island has charred some of its monumental carved stone figures, known as moai, authorities have said.</p> <p>The blaze reportedly swept through the Rapa Nui national park, 3,500km (2,175 miles) off the west coast of Chile, causing “irreparable” damage to the archaeological site.</p> <p>“More than 100 hectares (247 acres) were affected in the Rano Raraku sector which includes the wetland and moai sector,” the national park said in a statement on its official Facebook page on Thursday.</p>

Carolina Perez, cultural heritage undersecretary, said the island - which lies 3,500km (2,175 miles) off the west coast of Chile - had been razed by flames since Monday.

Rapa Nui has more than [1,000 stone statues](#) – giant heads that are believed to have first been carved in the 13th century by the island’s original inhabitants. The area around the Rano Raraku volcano, a Unesco world heritage site, was reportedly the most affected.

An estimated several hundred moai are in that area, as well as in the quarry where the stone used to carve the sculptures is extracted.

Ariki Tepano, director of the Ma’u Henua community in charge of the management and maintenance of the park, described the damage as “irreparable”.

“The moai are totally charred and you can see the effect of the fire upon them,” he said.

Easter Island mayor, Pedro Edmunds Paoa, said he believed the fire was “not an accident,” telling local broadcaster [Radio Pauta](#) that “all the fires on Rapa Nui are caused by human beings.”

“The damage caused by the fire can’t be undone,” Edmunds Paoa added. “The cracking of an original and emblematic stone cannot be recovered, no matter how many millions of euros or dollars are put into it.”

The park said a “shortage of volunteers” hindered the ability of officials to get the fire under control. The total damage to the site has yet to be assessed.

The fire comes just three months after the island was reopened to tourism on 5 August, after two years of closure due to Covid-19.

Before the pandemic, Easter Island – where the main livelihood is tourism – received 160,000 visitors a year, on two daily flights.

But with the arrival of Covid-19 in Chile, tourist activity was completely suspended.

The island was long inhabited by Polynesian people, before Chile annexed it in 1888. It is thought the monuments represent the living ancestors of Easter Island’s Polynesian people and were once linked to ritual activity, forming a focal point for communities.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Third Amazon warehouse fire in a week
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkgmpb/this-is-the-third-amazon-warehouse-to-catch-fire-this-week
GIST	<p>Amazon workers at ALB1, the company’s fulfillment center near Albany—which is set to hold a union election this coming Wednesday—reported that a fire broke out in the warehouse last night.</p> <p>The fire started late in the evening and lasted around 45 minutes, according to Seth Goldstein, a lawyer for the Amazon Labor Union which ALB1 plans to unionize with. The local fire department was contacted at around 10:54 p.m. Motherboard could not reach the fire department for comment. Goldstein said that night shift workers had been sent home, and that ALB1 would be closed for the following day.</p> <p>A spokesperson for Amazon confirmed the ALB1 fire. “Late Wednesday evening at our ALB1 facility in Schodack, NY, just outside Albany, there was a small fire contained to a compactor that's located just outside the doors of a loading dock,” the spokesperson wrote in an email to Motherboard. “The site was evacuated and the local fire department responded to the scene. After a preliminary investigation, fire department officials declared the building safe for use.”</p>

“Out of an abundance of caution, we sent night shift employees home with pay and canceled Thursday's day shift,” the spokesperson continued. “These employees will also be paid. We are grateful for the swift actions of first responders and the employees who handled the situation appropriately.”

This is the third Amazon facility to report a fire over this past week. On Monday night, there was a similar fire in the Staten Island warehouse. There, a fire broke out in a cardboard compactor. Day shift workers were sent home with pay, but night shift workers were not. They were told to wait in the break room until the New York Fire Department had cleared the warehouse to be safe.

However, workers said they could still smell the fumes from the fire, and felt it would be unsafe to go back to work—so they [held the first sit-in wildcat strike](#) in Amazon history. Amazon then, according to Goldstein, suspended 80 of them.

Also on Monday night, workers in a fulfillment center in Madison, Alabama, [reported their facility's second fire in two weeks](#). One employee told WAFF, “Our plant caught on fire again. This time it was in the same area, but it was a couple aisles over. You could still smell smoke in there. Half the warehouse was off limits.” The facility had previously been closed due to a fire reported in late September. WAFF wrote that the employees were feeling a sense of “fear and distrust.”

The Amazon spokesperson would not comment on why so many fires have broken out at warehouses this week, but said they were “looking into” the compactors.

“Sadly, I’m not surprised, because of all the worker safety violations,” Goldstein said. “The company’s focusing more on profits and union-busting than safety of the facility and its workers.”

“Had [management] been listening, we may not have been in this situation,” Goldstein said. He continued that before the workers return, there needs to be a full investigation by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the fire department, and that the results of that investigation should be shared with workers “in the spirit of transparency.”

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	10/06 Illinois drops cash bail; to release prisoners
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11288183/Thousands-prisoners-set-RELEASED-Illinois-jails-no-cash-bail-law.html
GIST	<p>Thousands of prisoners are set to be released across Illinois as it becomes the first state to completely do away with cash bail under a new law that goes into effect in January.</p> <p>The Safety, Accountability, Fairness and Equity-Today Act (SAFE-T Act) completely abolishes the cash bail system, which critics say disproportionately impacts black and brown communities and other underrepresented or impoverished groups.</p> <p>Under the law, anyone who is arrested may be released back on to the streets based on the assumption of innocence guarantee under the United States Constitution, though criminals accused of certain crimes — like forcible felonies, stalking and domestic abuse — will be exempt from pretrial release.</p> <p>It was first proposed by the Illinois Black Caucus in response to the May 2020 killing of George Floyd, and was signed into law by Gov JB Pritzker on February 22, 2021.</p> <p>As a result, Illinois became the first state to completely abolish cash bail, though other states, like New York, New Jersey, New Mexico, Kentucky and California have created reforms to their bail laws over the past few years.</p>

But ever since it was signed into law, Illinois law enforcement officials have warned that the SAFE-T Act will embolden criminals and make it harder to keep offenders off the streets, as crime rates are already spiraling out of control in Chicago.

Critics have compared it to The Purge, a movie in which the U.S. decriminalizes all crime for 24-hours.

And in just one county, officials report that 400 prisoners there will be released once the law goes into effect.

Now, as the new year nears, 17 different state attorneys from different counties in Illinois are desperately suing Gov. JB Pritzker to prevent the law from going into effect, [WTVO](#) reports.

They argue that its 'pretrial fairness' provision violates 40 different state statutes in the Illinois State Constitution.

'It is of the utmost importance as a state attorney's office that the Constitution is abided by on all levels,' Mercer County State Attorney Grace Simpson said in a [statement](#).

'As the chief legal officer in Mercer County, it would be unethical to move forward with the implementation of the SAFE-T [Act], without properly raising those concerns to the court.'

A press conference on the lawsuit filed in Winnebago County is expected to be held at 1.30pm local time.

Gov. Pritzker has continuously defended the SAFE-T Act, saying it would make release impossible for people accused of the worst crimes.

'No one is getting out of jail on January 1,' he claimed. 'That is not what the SAFE-T Act does. There is no such thing as a non-detainable defense that is not in the SAFE-T Act.'

'The SAFE-T Act is designed to keep murderers and rapists and domestic abusers in jail,' he continued. 'Right now, they can buy their way out, we want to keep them in jail with a Pre-Trial Fairness Act.'

Advocates of the law say it will help curtail institutional racism.

'That's just inequitable that some people get to be free because they have money and other people have to remain incarcerated, which has all kinds of terrible consequences for people's ability to work, for their housing, their whole families suffer,' said Ben Ruddell, a staff attorney with the ACLU of Illinois.

They point out that in addition to the SAFE-T Act creates co-responder programs in cities across Illinois, which would comprise law enforcement, mental health professions and social workers.

It also includes more investment in mental health services and trauma centers, and increases training standards for law enforcement.

Additionally, the SAFE-T Act would require body cameras for all police departments statewide.

Loyola University, with the help of the National Institute of Justice, will study the implementation and analyze the effectiveness of the new pretrial release system over the first year, and Attorney General Kwame Raoul has said changes could be made to the verbiage before it takes effect.

Raoul noted that his office has been in discussions about a 'number of issues' with the law, and a legislative group met Tuesday to discuss concerns.

But critics have slammed Pritzker for ridding judges of discretion when deciding cases.

In a recent op-ed in the Chicago Sun-Times, former Riverside Police Chief Tom Weitzel says the SAFE-T Act puts the burden on the state to prove by 'clear and convincing evidence' that a defendant has committed an offense and poses a real threat to the community.

He also railed against a provision of the law that requires that suspects must show evidence of willful flight in order to be detained.

'Now, judges will not be allowed to take into consideration how many times the suspect failed to show in court and if there is an active warrant for their arrest.'

Additionally, Weitzel pointed out that under the SAFE-T Act, criminals who are home on electronic monitoring will not be considered as having 'escaped' until they have been missing for 48 hours.

'This rule is just nothing short of ludicrous, and in no way, shape or form enhances public safety,' Weitzel wrote.

'If an offender cuts off their monitoring bracelets and does not respond to the electronic signal that is sent to them, or is not on the premises when an in-person status check is made by a county sheriff's officer, the suspect should be considered "escaped."

'But offenders not get a 48-hour free pass before a judge may issue a warrant for their arrest.'

And, Weitzel claimed, the new law creates six to eight hours worth of additional paperwork for officers.

'The police officer who should be patrolling your community will be on the streets less — in most cases, far less.

'The law will also create apathy and low morale,' he continued. 'Officers may think "Why bother charging someone with this felony and going through felony review when they are just going to be released without bond anyway?"

'In many cases this will be true.'

County officials also claim that the new costs associated with the law could lead to higher property taxes, with State Rep. Chris Bos saying: 'This legislation doesn't just make our communities less safe. It is ultimately going to make them more expensive.'

They say counties will be forced to raise property taxes to pay for some of the requirements of the law, including police body cameras and the systems that store video.

They will also require additional personnel in the courts, sheriff's departments and pretrial services.

DuPage County officials estimate that over the course of five years, the SAFE-T Act will cost \$63 million to implement.

It comes as a 29-year-old Chicago man became the 44th person accused of killing or shooting — or attempting to kill or shoot — someone in the Windy City while awaiting trial for a felony this year.

Prosecutors say Absalom Coakley shot and killed two men during a party late last month while on bond for an attempted murder and on probation for a felony narcotics case.

Authorities claim Coakley joined about 50 people for a video shoot and house party on September 24.

At around 3.45am, they say a fight broke out in the kitchen and Coakley pulled out a gun and shot 29 year old Terrance Johnson in the back of the head, killing him.

He then walked out of the house, CWB Chicago reports, and had a short altercation with Terrance Young, 30, on the sidewalk outside the home before shooting Young in the face.

Coakley was ultimately arrested by a fugitive task force on Thursday as he entered a rideshare vehicle. Police say he was carrying a .40 caliber gun at the time, the same type that was used in the murders.

He is charged with two counts of first degree murder and unlawful use of a weapon by a felon, but his public defender successfully argued he should be held without bail claiming the circumstances of the shootings are unclear.

Judge Susana Ortiz agreed, and held him without bail for violating the terms of bail in the pending attempted murder case and without bail for violating the terms of his probation.

Crime in Chicago is now up more than 37 percent from last year.

Driving the increase is a whopping 74 percent increase in motor vehicle thefts over the year prior, and a 61 percent increase in the number of thefts.

Robberies are also up 17 percent in the Windy City, and burglaries are up 24 percent.

The Windy City also ranks seventh in America for murders, according to the New York Times, with a three-year-old boy shot in the back of his mother's car in a road rage incident just last week.

Mateo Zastro was riding with his family in the white SUV on the Southwest Side Friday night when a red sedan pulled up and a gunman in the back seat opened fire.

The mother was reported to have tried to drive away after becoming embroiled in some sort of dispute with a red sedan after leaving the mall near 44th & West Marquette Road in the West Lawn neighborhood around 8.30pm.

But the red car followed her and brazenly shot into the family vehicle, hitting Mateo in the head.

He was rushed to Advocate Christ Medical Center but the dinosaur-loving toddler died eight hours later.

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HEADLINE	10/07 Alabama state prisons rife w/violence
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/07/alabama-state-prisons-violence-strike-investigation
GIST	<p>Last Friday, five days after Alabama prisoners launched a statewide labor strike, Republican governor Kay Ivey stood on the steps of the governor's mansion and assured reporters that the head of the state's beleaguered corrections department had things "well under control".</p> <p>But images and interviews from inside the state's prisons show a system in disarray, with deteriorating conditions, pervasive violence, multiple deaths and little oversight from staff.</p> <p>The strike started on 26 September after thousands of prisoners refused to leave their dorms and cell blocks for work in mess halls, factories and trash crews. Prison administrators said they had to cut back food rations from three meals a day to two, which prisoners saw as retaliation, but officials blamed on the fact that meals are generally prepared by the incarcerated workers themselves. Guards stopped letting people out for visiting, recreation or school. Cell phone footage shared with the Marshall Project shows trash piling up in walkways and dorms in some prisons.</p> <p>Then on Saturday – less than 24 hours after the governor's declaration on the mansion steps – prisoners recorded grainy cell phone footage of what appears to be a fatal stabbing in an Alabama lockup. The first of the two short clips, which prisoners said was filmed at Donaldson correctional facility in Bessemer, Alabama, shows one man apparently stabbing another in a common room as others watch from a few feet</p>

away. The second video shows a man sprawled out on the floor, struggling to lift his head up, while another prisoner leans over him as if to check whether he's alive.

The Alabama Department of Corrections did not dispute the authenticity of the videos, and confirmed that 30-year-old Denarieya Smith was killed Saturday at Donaldson in an "inmate-on-inmate assault involving a weapon", which officials are investigating. The department cited security concerns and refused to answer questions about whether the unit is understaffed. In the most recent numbers made public, the department of corrections was authorized by the legislature to have 3,326 employees in 2018. This summer, it had a little more than half that many, according to a [staffing report from June](#).

"We're not going outside except for chow," said one man who spoke to the Marshall Project from a medium-security facility and asked not to be named for fear of retaliation from prison officials. "There's no visitation. There's no trade school. No laundry. No ice. The officers have been working 16 hours a day since this started, but I noticed there's less and less of them whenever we go to chow."

The man said he'd seen videos of fights and violence, including images of Smith's killing. The county's medical examiner confirmed that a second prisoner at Donaldson – 29-year-old Joseph Agee – had also been stabbed to death since the strike began. The medical examiner said both deaths are being investigated as homicides.

"What we saw in that video is outrageous – but it's been outrageous in DOC for so long, and it just doesn't let up," said Carla Crowder, executive director of the advocacy nonprofit Alabama Appleseed. "It is not unusual to have multiple homicides or drug overdoses in a week, and videos circulating of sleeping guards and open-air drug use in the dorms. That is the new normal."

She added that the governor's claims of control are "meaningless words, not grounded in reality," she added.

The Alabama prison system has been the target of a federal investigation for years, and in late 2020, the [Department of Justice](#) sued the state over concerns about overcrowding, violence and a high risk of death for incarcerated people. Despite the added scrutiny, prisoners and advocates said conditions have not improved. And as the case is [not slated for trial until 2024](#), some hoped a collective action would spark [legislative changes to sentencing and parole practices that could free people instead](#).

Since the justice department's suit began, "the [death toll has risen significantly](#)", said Diyawn Caldwell, founder of the advocacy group Both Sides of the Wall. "They're understaffed. The officers are bringing in the drugs that are killing people. The conditions are barbaric. You have people that are committing suicide. [No one is making parole](#). What else do we do?"

The corrections department did not respond to questions this week about the extent of the work stoppage, about violence and deaths in the prisons or about Caldwell's allegations.

After months of planning, prisoners and outside advocates publicly issued a list of policy-focused demands last week. The list included a streamlined review process for medical furloughs, clearer parole guidelines, retroactive repeal of the state's habitual offender law, an end to life-without-parole sentences and the creation of a statewide conviction integrity unit. Prisoners who spoke to the Marshall Project acknowledged that most of the demands were outside the purview of the corrections department and would instead require the legislature to act.

"Maybe they have to start listening. I think they know something is wrong, but did they know we're really tired of it? By stopping work now, we are sending this system that's already in crisis into another crisis," said K Shaun Traywick, an incarcerated activist who goes by "Swift Justice."

Prison strikes are not uncommon, and at least twice in recent years [prisoners in Alabama have been at the forefront](#) in launching work stoppages that spread to prisons in several states, garnering nationwide attention.

Yet almost as soon as the strike began last week, people in prison said officials started retaliating, cutting back food to two paltry bagged meals a day. Pictures sent from inside show one meal made up of two hot dogs, two pieces of bread and a grapefruit. Another consisted of an unappetizing spread of coleslaw, prunes, two pieces of bread and baloney.

“Meals have included slices of bread topped with some sort of sludge, uncooked hot dogs and minuscule portions of canned fruit,” a lawyer representing the prisoners [wrote on the fifth day](#) of the strike. In a court filing last week, attorney Clifford Hardy accused the corrections department of trying to starve prisoners into submission, citing as proof a memo circulated at Donaldson Correctional Facility “detailing that meal reductions would continue until the labor strike ended”.

Prison officials have not yet responded to the allegations in court, but [said in a press release](#) that because mess hall workers had refused to come to work, the restricted feeding schedule was “logistically necessary to ensure that other critical services are being provided”.

The same day the prisoners’ lawyer complained to the court, the governor held her press conference in Montgomery, calling the demands “just unreasonable” and offering assurances to the public that new prison construction would improve conditions.

“Everything’s still operational,” [she said](#). “There’s no disruption in essential services. We’ve still got our [two prisons being built](#), so we can better provide safety for the inmates as well as the workers.” Prisoners and their advocates disputed the notion that the demands were unreasonable and scoffed at the governor’s assessment of the current state of Alabama’s lockups.

It’s not clear how many prisoners are participating in the strike or how long the work stoppage might last. On Monday, [the department told AL.com](#) that some people had returned to work, but five prisons remained entirely shut down by the strike. Prisoners who spoke to the Marshall Project disputed the department’s characterization that the protest was winding down.

Regardless, the collective action is attracting attention from people imprisoned in other states. In group chat messages shared with the Marshall Project, dozens of men in prisons in other southern states have begun talking about whether they could replicate Alabama’s work stoppage.

“I wanna see Georgia do this,” said the man who spoke to the Marshall Project from a medium-security prison in Alabama. “I wanna see the whole south do this.”

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HEADLINE	10/06 Canada: mass stabbing suspect acted alone
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/06/canada-saskatchewan-stabbing-damien-sanderson/
GIST	<p>TORONTO — Canadian police said Thursday that they now believe one man, Myles Sanderson, did all the killing in the mass stabbing that shook rural Saskatchewan last month, including that of his brother, Damien, whom police had previously identified as a suspect.</p> <p>Rhonda Blackmore, assistant commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Saskatchewan, said evidence suggests that Damien Sanderson, 31, helped plan the attacks at the James Smith Cree Nation and nearby village of Weldon that left 11 dead in one of Canada’s deadliest mass killings.</p> <p>But “Myles Sanderson committed all of the homicides alone,” she said at a news conference in Regina. “RCMP believes it is important to clarify Damien’s involvement in the sequence of these events to demonstrate our continued commitment to transparency to the victims and families of those affected, and to the public.”</p> <p>Police initially identified both brothers as suspects in the Sept. 4 attacks that left 18 injured, a province reeling and far more questions than answers.</p>

Damien Sanderson was found dead at the James Smith Cree Nation with injuries that authorities had said did not appear to be self-inflicted.

Authorities apprehended Myles Sanderson, 32, on the side of a highway near Rosthern, roughly 80 miles southwest of the Indigenous community, after an almost four-day search. They said he went into medical distress shortly after he was taken into custody. He was taken to a hospital, where he died.

The victims of the attacks ranged in age from 23 to 78. All but one were from the James Smith Cree Nation.

Separately on Thursday, the Parole Board of Canada and Correctional Service of Canada said it would create a “national board” to investigate the circumstances surrounding Myles Sanderson’s release from federal custody.

Sanderson had 59 convictions as an adult and was serving a four-year, four-month sentence for charges including assault and robbery, according to records from the Parole Board of Canada.

He was given a statutory release in August 2021. Canadian law requires that some federal offenders who have served two-thirds of their sentences be released from prison and placed under supervision in their communities.

Myles Sanderson’s statutory release was canceled in November after he was not honest with his parole supervisor about violating its conditions. That decision was canceled in February, and he was released again. In May, he did not report to his parole officer and was declared “unlawfully at large.”

Saskatchewan’s chief coroner has ordered two public inquests into the attack, including into the circumstances of Myles Sanderson’s death. He has said that “very preliminary autopsy” results show that he did not die of blunt force trauma.

Damien Sanderson’s wife, Skye, told Global News that she called police the day before the rampage to report him and his brother, after Damien had taken her car. She claimed that while police returned her car that night, they did not conduct an exhaustive search for the brothers.

The RCMP have largely refused to provide updates on their investigation, saying they can’t reveal details before the coroner’s inquests begin next year.

But on Thursday, Blackmore said the RCMP had received a call about a stolen car on the James Smith Cree Nation the day before the attack and later located it in front of a residence on the reserve. She said officers searched the residence and asked three of the men inside for their identities.

Blackmore said the investigation has determined that Damien Sanderson, who was wanted for assault, provided a false name to the officers. She said the photograph that police had of him was out of date.

Blackmore said the brothers were selling drugs in the community the day before the rampage and had been involved in three violent altercations. She said none of those incidents were reported to police before the mass stabbings.

Blackmore said the chief coroner was aware she was providing the update.

“We felt it important to address some of this information to balance both the interest of the family and the victims as they work on healing from this incident ... as well as information for the public so they have answers to the questions that are being raised,” she said.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Proud Boys leader pleads guilty Jan 6 role
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/06/proud-boys-capitol-attack-seditious-conspiracy

GIST	<p>A North Carolina man pleaded guilty on Thursday to plotting with other members of the far-right Proud Boys to violently stop the transfer of presidential power after the 2020 election, making him the first member of the extremist group to plead guilty to a seditious conspiracy charge.</p> <p>Jeremy Bertino, 43, has agreed to cooperate with the justice department's investigation of the role that Proud Boys leaders played in the mob's attack on the Capitol on 6 January 2021, a federal prosecutor said. Judge Timothy Kelly agreed to release Bertino pending a sentencing hearing that was not immediately scheduled.</p> <p>Bertino also pleaded guilty to a charge of unlawfully possessing firearms in March in Belmont, North Carolina. Kelly accepted his guilty plea to both charges during a brief hearing after the case against Bertino was filed on Thursday.</p> <p>Prosecutor Erik Kenerson said estimated sentencing guidelines for Bertino's case recommend a prison sentence ranging from four years and three months to five years and three months. The civil war-era seditious conspiracy charge carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.</p> <p>Former Proud Boys national chairman Henry "Enrique" Tarrío and four other group members also have been charged with seditious conspiracy for what prosecutors say was a coordinated attack on the Capitol to stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden's 2020 electoral victory.</p> <p>A trial for Ethan Nordean, Joseph Biggs, Zachary Rehl and Dominic Pezzola is scheduled to start in December.</p> <p>A trial started this week in Washington for the seditious conspiracy case against the founder of the Oath Keepers and other members of the anti-government militia group for their participation in the attack.</p> <p>More than three dozen people charged in the Capitol siege have been identified by federal authorities as leaders, members or associates of the Proud Boys.</p> <p>Two of them Matthew Greene and Charles Donohoe pleaded guilty to conspiring to obstruct an official proceeding, the January 6 joint session of Congress for certifying the electoral college vote.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Pardon federal convictions pot possession
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/06/us/politics/biden-marijuana-pardon.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — President Biden on Thursday pardoned thousands of people convicted of marijuana possession under federal law and said his administration would review whether marijuana should still be in the same legal category as drugs like heroin and LSD.</p> <p>The pardons will clear everyone convicted on federal charges of simple possession since it became a crime in the 1970s. Officials said full data was not available but noted that about 6,500 people were convicted of simple possession between 1992 and 2021, not counting legal permanent residents. The pardons will also affect people who were convicted under District of Columbia drug laws; officials estimated that number to be in the thousands.</p> <p>The pardons will not apply to people convicted of selling or distributing marijuana. And officials said there are no people now serving time in federal prisons solely for marijuana possession. But the move will help remove obstacles for people trying to get a job, find housing, apply to college or get federal benefits.</p> <p>Mr. Biden urged governors to follow his lead for people convicted on state charges of simple possession, who vastly outnumber those charged under federal laws.</p>

Still, the president's actions — which come about a month before the midterm elections and could help energize Democratic supporters — represent a fundamental change in America's response to a drug that has been at the center of a clash between culture and policing for more than a half-century.

"Sending people to jail for possessing marijuana has upended too many lives — for conduct that is legal in many states," Mr. Biden said on Twitter on Thursday. "That's before you address the clear racial disparities around prosecution and conviction. Today, we begin to right these wrongs."

In a video, he added: "While white and Black and brown people use marijuana at similar rates, Black and brown people are arrested, prosecuted and convicted at disproportionately higher rates."

Mr. Biden stopped short of calling for the complete decriminalization of marijuana, which is something that Congress would have to do. But he said on Twitter that the federal government still needs "important limitations on trafficking, marketing and underage sales of marijuana."

The actions were part of a long evolution on criminal justice for Mr. Biden, who helped pass a string of laws during his 36 years in the Senate that laid the groundwork for mass incarceration. He apologized on the campaign trail for portions of one of the more aggressive measures he had championed, the 1994 crime bill, and he campaigned on providing more leniency to nonviolent drug offenders.

The pardons move the federal government more in line with the positions taken by some state governments, which have already reduced or eliminated the criminal punishments for simply possessing marijuana — punishments that for decades have sent people to prison.

Mr. Biden also said Thursday that he has asked the attorney general to review how marijuana is legally categorized, which helps determine what kind of penalties are involved.

"The federal government currently classifies marijuana as a Schedule 1 substance," he said, "the same as heroin and LSD and more serious than fentanyl. It makes no sense."

Some of the president's Republican critics lashed out at him after the announcement.

"In the midst of a crime wave and on the brink of a recession, Joe Biden is giving blanket pardons to drug offenders," said Senator Tom Cotton, Republican of Arkansas. "This is a desperate attempt to distract from failed leadership."

Advocacy groups, including those representing minorities, have been urging Mr. Biden to take action as a way of demonstrating his commitment to reforming the inequities built into the criminal justice system.

Inimai Chettiar, the federal director of the Justice Action Network, called the president's move "a really good step" and said one of the most important parts of Mr. Biden's policy is the directive to review how future marijuana crimes are prosecuted.

"That's trying to change a policy decision that was made that marijuana is as dangerous as these other drugs, which we know is not true," Ms. Chettiar said.

Udi Ofer, a Princeton University professor and former deputy national political director of the American Civil Liberties Union, said simple possession of marijuana is a crime "almost entirely prosecuted by the states." The federal government tends to prosecute marijuana trafficking crimes, he said.

Only 92 people were sentenced on federal marijuana possession charges in 2017, out of nearly 20,000 drug convictions, according to the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

"This is an important political statement, it's an important value statement, it's progress, but this is a drop in the ocean of injustice," Mr. Ofer said.

Marijuana is already fully legal in about 20 states, and some other states have relaxed criminal penalties, according to DISA, a large drug-testing company that tracks state laws regarding marijuana. It remains fully illegal in a handful of states. The federal government will stop charging anyone with simple possession starting on Thursday, officials said.

Mr. Biden's announcement could give Democrats a boost in the upcoming midterm elections, especially among young people, liberals and minority communities.

In July, a half-dozen of the Senate's most liberal senators wrote Mr. Biden a letter urging him to take the steps he announced on Thursday.

"The administration's failure to coordinate a timely review of its cannabis policy is harming thousands of Americans, slowing research, and depriving Americans of their ability to use marijuana for medical or other purposes," wrote the group of senators, including his onetime rivals, Bernie Sanders, independent of Vermont, and Elizabeth Warren, Democrat of Massachusetts.

More recently, John Fetterman, the Democratic candidate for Senate in Pennsylvania, urged the president to act.

"It's long past time that we finally decriminalize marijuana," he said on Twitter, adding, "@POTUS you have the power to use your executive authority to chart a new course."

Some opponents of full marijuana legalization praised Mr. Biden's move, saying it was a good way to avoid going further.

"No one deserves to be in jail for a joint," said Kevin Sabet, who leads Smart Approaches to Marijuana, which opposes legalization. "But we should also not be selling highly potent THC products, nor should we promote and encourage use among young people."

Some criminal justice activists have criticized Mr. Biden for taking too long to enact more lenient sentencing reform proposals like the one he announced on Thursday.

They argue that Mr. Biden was cowed by Republican attacks that blamed the president's policies for the rise in violent crimes in some parts of the country. Mr. Biden has rejected the call from some members of his party to "defund" the police and has insisted that police need more money to do their jobs.

White House officials and the Domestic Policy Council, led by Susan Rice, also held calls with criminal justice advocates near the end of last year to field ideas for using executive action to enact prison reform. In April, Mr. Biden used clemency to commute the sentences of 75 nonviolent drug offenders.

While studies show white and Black people use marijuana at similar rates, a Black person is more than three times as likely to be arrested for possession than a white person, according to a report from the A.C.L.U. that analyzed marijuana arrest data from 2010 to 2018.

A vast majority of marijuana arrests fall under the jurisdiction of states, but the crime has historically represented about a third of nationwide drug possession arrests by state and federal officials. According to preliminary F.B.I. data, more than 170,800 of the roughly 490,000 drug possession arrests in 2021 were related to marijuana possession.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Judge suspends Lori Vallows jury trial
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/special-reports/lori-vallows-case-suspended-judge-steven-boyce-says/277-4c576aa9-b311-4a20-a2b8-f6c2557e3b62

GIST	<p>BOISE, Idaho — Judge Steven Boyce ordered that Lori Vallow's trial be suspended until her "competency to stand trial can be determined", and vacated her January 9 trial date.</p> <p>Lori Vallow Daybell and her husband Chad Daybell are currently in custody in Idaho, facing charges in the deaths of her children, Tylee and JJ. Both Chad and Lori are also facing additional charges connected to the deaths of their late spouses.</p> <p>Both Chad Daybell and Lori Vallow Daybell have pleaded not guilty to all charges against them in Idaho. Prosecutors are also seeking the death penalty for both Chad Daybell and Lori Vallow Daybell.</p> <p>Lori moved to Idaho with her kids from Arizona in September of 2019. The kids disappeared before the end of the month.</p> <p>After the kids disappeared, Daybell's first wife, Tammy Daybell, died in October of 2019. Initially, it was believed she died in her sleep, but further investigation determined her death was suspicious, and investigators exhumed her body and later charged Chad Daybell and Lori Vallow Daybell with murder and conspiracy to murder.</p> <p>Lori and Chad Daybell got married in Hawaii just a few weeks after Tammy's death.</p> <p>While in Hawaii, Lori was arrested for failing to produce her kids in February 2020 and extradited back to Idaho in March of that year. Chad Daybell would later be arrested in June after the children's bodies were discovered on his property.</p> <p>A trial for the couple was scheduled for January 2023.</p> <p>Last week, motions were filed by Chad Daybell's attorney to sever the two cases, and push the trial date back to at least October 2023. His attorneys also filed a motion to allow Chad to wear civilian clothes during the trial. No hearing dates have been set yet, but Daybell is asking the judge to schedule a hearing on Oct. 13, at 9:00 a.m. to hear all of them.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Auburn ups penalties repeat drug offenders
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/auburn-increases-penalties-for-repeat-drug-offenders#
GIST	<p>AUBURN, Wash. — Tougher drug laws have been approved that will keep chronic offenders behind bars longer in the hopes they will accept treatment services.</p> <p>The Auburn City Council passed the new ordinance on Monday that will require a minimum 30-day stay in jail for people who are repeatedly caught using or possessing drugs in certain parts of the city.</p> <p>Even though it's just down the street from police headquarters, Athens Pizza & Pasta has had its run-ins with drug addicts.</p> <p>“We have experienced some of the drug issues as a business,” said Yianni Contoravdis, whose family owns the restaurant. “We have people who come in and go straight to the bathrooms to do whatever. Who knows what they are doing in there they could be there for 30 minutes to an hour if nobody kicks them out.”</p> <p>Rainbow Cafe in Auburn's downtown core has its struggles with people using or selling dope in the neighborhood.</p> <p>“I think around here it's a pretty big issue. a lot of people are afraid to come to work,” said Jill Wolph, who is a manager at Rainbow Café.</p>

Auburn has designated special anti-drug emphasis zones which prohibit people convicted of a drug crime from returning. The “stay out of drug area,” or SODA, currently includes city parks, the downtown business district, the Outlet Collection, the Southend neighborhood, and several of the trail systems.

The new law expands those SODA zones and will impose a minimum 30-day jail stay for people who violate those zone three or more times. Drug offenders who are arrested within 1,000 feet of a place children are likely to be and people who commit violence in those zones would also face the 30-day mandatory minimum.

The extended time behind bars is seen as a way to make sure people can access medical and mental health treatment, according to city council members.

Councilmember Kate Baldwin said city leaders wanted to find a solution after hearing ongoing complaints.

“This ordinance and this action by the mayor, the council, and the city is intended to be as responsive as we can to what we hear in the community as folks are looking to have a better sense of safety,” Baldwin said during the council meeting.

However, some say you can't force addicts into treatment, and locking them up for a longer time might not solve anything.

“I believe it's done with good intention but it's not a problem we can just solve by putting people in jail. These people need help,” Contoravdis said.

Councilmember Chris Stearns asked that an equity review be done among those arrested to see if people of color or other minorities are disproportionately impacted. The amendment was adopted but details of the review are still being worked out.

The new law takes effect at the end of the week. Police said enforcement will be handled as part of their daily operations.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Powwow for Indigenous inmates in prison
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/community/facing-race/indigenous-inmates-powwow-washington-state-penitentiary/281-3b0d020b-0e09-4641-811f-8994e326609d
GIST	<p>WALLA WALLA, Wash. — Head four hours east of Seattle across the ancestral lands of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla people and you’ll eventually see a sign that reads “prison boundary.” A place where some tribal members spend days thinking about what they’ve lost, daydreaming of freedom.</p> <p>“I came in pretty angry. I’ve come a long way,” said Tallon Saluskin.</p> <p>Saluskin is a member of the Yakama Nation and an inmate of the Washington State Penitentiary. For Saluskin and dozens of other Native American inmates, this is an extraordinary day in prison.</p> <p>For the first time in nearly three years, inmates of the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla are hosting a traditional Native powwow with family and friends as guests. It’s part religious ceremony part celebration.</p> <p>“While we’re in here, we take advantage of this, and we put our culture all the way up and we learn our ways, and we give back to our community for everything we’ve taken, you know,” Saluskin said.</p> <p>In many cases what they’ve taken they can’t replace.</p>

Anthony Lewis is a tribal member who was convicted of murder in 2016. A KIMA news camera in the courtroom captured his emotional plea to the court and the surviving family members of the man he was convicted of killing.

“With all my heart, on my knees, I beg you guys to forgive me. They say it was a choice, I say addiction is something that I don’t wish on nobody. I’m sorry,” Lewis said.

That was six years ago. Now, he finds healing and repentance in long-founded tribal traditions.

“Everything that we’ve done is one bead at a time. You know what I mean? Just like one step at a time, it’s what we do,” Lewis said.

Lewis has sobered up and softened – a gentle personality that’s revealed when his family is present. His adult daughter and young grandchild attended the prison’s powwow. A visit that was especially powerful as most in-person visitations were canceled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The powwow came back to the state penitentiary with the help of Jeremy Garretson, a convicted felon turned mentor for recently released prisoners. He worked with the Department of Corrections to make the celebration a reality.

“Being able to have a moment to brush all of that off, and ignore where we are and have a moment with your family, and look your loved ones in the eye and be together, it’s priceless,” Garretson said.

His life’s mission is to keep these men from ever going back.

“Native Americans may not have the highest population per capita in this facility but they have the highest recidivism rate amongst their ethnic and cultural groups – our people are perpetually coming back and coming back and it has to stop,” Garretson continued.

State records show Native American inmates have the highest recidivism rate of any demographic. For the general population, 32% will re-offend within three years, but for Native American inmates, the rate is 45.3%.

Garretson knows better than anyone how powerful Indigenous cultural traditions can be. Ten years ago he found his spirituality behind prison walls in a sweat lodge ceremony.

“From that point forward I focused on culture the void in me that I use to fill with the gangs and the drugs and the nonsense I now filled with the culture, the ceremony and the medicine,” Garretson said.

That’s the intention of bringing the prison pow wows back, to create opportunities to connect with their ancestors, culture, and history and in the process hopefully find peace.

“Letting the world see what we go through out here. Even though you see a lot of barbed wire fence, I hope for the moment that you guys are out here you feel our freedom that we’ve had out here,” Lewis continued.

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HEADLINE	10/06 EWU warns students of sexual assaults
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/ewu-police-chief-warns-students-of-sexual-assaults-in-campus-housing/
GIST	<p>Eastern Washington University students reported multiple sexual assault and misconduct incidents on campus in the first few weeks of the fall quarter, prompting police to send a campuswide email.</p> <p>Since students moved into residence halls on Sept. 15, the EWU Police Department has responded to three reports of sexual assault and two instances of sexual misconduct, said Chief Jewell Day.</p>

All the incidents took place in campus housing, he said. Police continue to investigate some of the cases, but in others the victim did not want to press charges, he said. No one has been arrested in connection with the assaults. Each assault was an isolated incident, Day said.

The number of reports in such a short period prompted Day to send the campuswide email last week that included resources and safety tips.

“While circumstances around sexual misconduct can vary, it is important to emphasize that acts of sexual violence are never the victim’s fault,” the email read. “The blame lies solely with the perpetrator.”

Police encouraged students to lock their residence hall rooms, not accept drinks from strangers, consume alcohol responsibly, be responsive bystanders and call for help if needed.

“We have a zero tolerance for that type of behavior here on campus,” Day said.

Even in cases where people elected not to pursue charges, their report triggers a student conduct investigation, which could result in campus discipline.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Swatting spree terrorizing schools
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/swatting-schools-us-september-2022/
GIST	<p>AT 1:15 PM on September 15, a man who identified himself as Tom Gomez called Sangamon County Central Dispatch in Illinois to report that two gunmen had shot a dozen students at Springfield High School. According to audio of the call obtained by WIRED, the man was specific. The caller, breathing heavily, told dispatchers that he was locked inside a math classroom with other students and that the two men, both dressed in blue pants and green jackets, were killing students in the adjacent classroom: room 219.</p> <p>Within five minutes, Springfield Police were at the high school's second floor, descending on the room where they were told a mass murder had occurred. The problem is that, according to police records, Springfield High doesn't have a room 219. In fact, there was no shooting at all.</p> <p>The dangerous hoax call was one of more than 90 false reports of active shooter incidents at US schools made during the second half of September, WIRED found. From Lincoln High in Dallas, Texas, to Lincoln High in Des Moines, Iowa; McArthur High in Hollywood, Florida, to Hollywood High in Los Angeles, these false reports are part of a disturbing spree of recent swatting incidents that crisscross the United States. While experts who study violence at schools say that false reports of shootings inspire copycats, state and local law enforcement officials say that many of these swatting attacks seem to stem from a single person or group.</p> <p>Through local news reports, police records, and interviews with state and local officials, WIRED compiled a list of 92 false reports of school shooting incidents in 16 states that took place from September 13 to 30. Many of the false reports we tracked align with data collected by the Educator's School Safety Network. While several impacted states experienced only one such call, others recorded a staggering number, including at least eight in Ohio, 15 in Virginia, and 17 in Minnesota during that three-week period.</p> <p>Of the false reports WIRED tracked, at least 32 appear to be linked to a single group or perpetrator. Of the 60 remaining calls, many were made within minutes of one another. Most police departments refused to provide us with records or did not respond to multiple requests to confirm details about the contents of the calls, however, so the number of calls linked to a single swatting campaign may be much higher.</p> <p>SUPERINTENDENT DREW EVANS of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, a statewide fusion center tracking these incidents, says that in each of the 17 calls in his state, the caller had a distinct accent and that the calls were made using the same voice over IP technology. “There’s a lot of different</p>

technology that could make it appear to be a single person, but all the indications we have are that it's either one person or a single entity," Evans says.

In audio of the call to Sangamon County Central Dispatch, the caller indeed had a discernible accent. In a detailed report of the call for service, the dispatcher noted that the caller was a "FOREIGN SPEAKING MALE" and that the caller was "SPEAKING VERY FAST WITH MIDDLE EASTERN ACCENT." Audio of two calls from Ohio that WIRED obtained appear to be of the same person as the Springfield call's "Tom Gomez," and the caller describes the fake shooting with nearly identical details about the incident. In total, law enforcement officials from six states—Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Ohio, and Virginia—all described receiving similar calls. In each call, officials confirmed that a man with a heavy accent called from an out-of-state number and reported a mass-casualty attack. In some instances the caller reported that the shooting occurred in a specific room number that does not exist and included details about the color of the pants, shirts, and jackets of the alleged shooters.

Swatting—a prank call in which someone makes a false report to emergency services in order to get a SWAT team dispatched to a target location—has been around for more than a decade. (The US Department of Justice has used the term "swatting" since [at least 2007](#).) While no one has been seriously injured in the recent surge of swatting attacks at schools, these pranks can be deadly. In 2017, [Wichita police shot and killed a 28-year-old man](#) at his front door while responding to a false report. (In what appears to be a coincidence, Wichita's North High School was targeted in this recent spree.) Bolton High School in Alexandria, Louisiana, was one of at least 16 Louisiana schools targeted in September. Lieutenant Lane Windham of the Alexandria Police Department says the explanation is obvious. "I don't think this is some prank. It's terrorism," he says. "When someone's trying to terrorize the teachers, parents, all the students, and the community, what else can you call it?"

School swatting attacks appear to be preying on a familiar American fear that not only are students vulnerable to violence in their classrooms, but that law enforcement is powerless to stop it, sometimes spurring parents to try to do so themselves. This nightmare scenario became all too real during the mass shooting at Robb Elementary in Uvalde, Texas, in late May, where parents rescued their own children as police failed to act. Meanwhile, the threat of school shootings remains all too real. According to [research](#) from Everytown USA, a nonprofit that tracks school shootings, the 2021–2022 school year saw nearly quadruple the average number of gunfire incidents since 2013.

Amanda Klinger, director of programs and cofounder of the [Educator's School Safety Network](#), works closely with one of the school districts in Ohio that were targeted by a swatting attack in September. "In speaking to a number of people who experienced it, I can tell you that the anxiety and fear—it was real to them for 15 minutes," she says. "There's a period of time in these incidents where people are literally running for their lives, law enforcement is responding with their weapons, and people think it's the real thing." At that particular school—Licking Valley High in Newark, Ohio—[an armed man showed up to try to help](#) after hearing about reports of an active shooting. At a school in San Antonio, Texas, that went on lockdown after false reports of a shooting, [a man reportedly injured his arm](#) trying to break a window to try to rescue students.

Educator's School Safety Network tracks violent incidents that occur at schools. In data Klinger shared with WIRED, her organization found that since August there have been 99 false reports in the US. That's more than seven times the number of incidents her organization tracked during the same time period in 2019. (Educator's School Safety Net does not include 2020 and 2021 in its data set because, it found, the data was too "abnormal" due to virtual schooling.)

On September 13, Houston's Heights High was one of at least six Texas schools targeted on that day. It's also the earliest swatting call that WIRED found linked to the single person or entity likely responsible for the later attacks. According to [local news reports](#), the caller described the alleged shooting using many of the same details as in other calls that WIRED reviewed. For example, he gave a room number on the second floor of the building and described the color of the clothing worn by the suspects. In a video filmed by a student at Heights High and [obtained by reporters at television station KHOU](#), police with their weapons drawn can be seen pushing their way through a classroom door that had been barricaded shut

with a table. When an officer asks the students if they had heard any shots fired, the students nervously respond that they hadn't. The video ends with officers marching the entire class down the hall with their hands over their heads to be checked for weapons.

"I think we are going to find that, for a generation of kids, there is a real cost to having this specter of a school shooting looming so large in their minds," Klinger says.

STATE AND LOCAL law enforcement say they are working with the FBI to trace the source of the calls. But right now, they are providing few details. Lieutenant Windam of the Alexandria Police Department in Louisiana says the FBI traced the call to an "African country known for harboring terrorists." He declined to name the country. In Cloquet, Minnesota, the police department similarly says that the FBI informed them that the call "originated in a similar bomb-threat incident in Africa," according to the [Duluth News Tribune](#). In Virginia, where more than a dozen schools were targeted, the chief of police of South Hill says that he thinks "an app was used to spoof phone numbers" and that the "FBI tracked it back to Africa."

When asked about the call's connection to a country in Africa, the FBI declined to comment. However, in an emailed statement, the agency says, "The FBI takes swatting very seriously because it puts innocent people at risk. While we have no information to indicate a specific and credible threat, we will continue to work with our local, state, and federal law enforcement partners to gather, share, and act upon threat information as it comes to our attention."

Wherever the calls came from, police appear to be struggling with how best to handle these kinds of incidents.

When the report came in about an active shooter at Bishop Diego High in California, Sergeant Ethan Ragsdale of the Santa Barbara Police Department says, nearly 100 law enforcement officers dropped everything to respond. "This is an all-hands-on-deck call whether or not we think it's fake," he says. Ragsdale says these kinds of calls rob the community of vital resources. "It's disgusting to think that someone is using this as a form of entertainment," he says.

"Seeing all those kids' faces, some as young as 14, they were terrified," Ragsdale adds. "That's why this is not just being looked at as a false report. It's why we are asking the FBI to assist us with the investigation."

Ultimately, Klinger says, schools and law enforcement should think holistically about their approach to school safety and be prepared for false reports. This includes ensuring their communication plans are up to date, installing consistent and accurate signage at the school in case of an emergency, and having a plan to effectively communicate with parents. And while it's possible for households to [protect themselves against swatting](#) by registering their addresses with the police, that doesn't work for schools. The best available option is often to cause as little fallout as possible.

"Schools are in a tough position whenever there is a threat or a false report," she says. "They can't 'not respond,' but also, sometimes, their response actually exacerbates the contagion effect of these types of threats."

Update 10-06-2022, 5:45 PM ET: At least a dozen schools in South Carolina were the targets of swatting calls on Wednesday. These are in addition to the more than 90 swatting calls we tracked previously. WIRED confirmed that at least two are connected to the ongoing spree, but that number is likely much higher. Furthermore, one of the South Carolina police departments who received a hoax call confirmed that, according to records they requested from the VoIP service the caller used to place the false report, the IP address of the call was international.

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Click on source link to listen to audio of: The voice in the false-report call about Springfield High in Illinois sounds identical to a caller targeting schools in other states.

SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/man-gets-4-years-plotting-kidnap-michigan-gov-whitmer-rcna51141
GIST	<p>A Michigan man who plotted with others to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in 2020 was sentenced to four years in prison Thursday, federal prosecutors said.</p> <p>Kaleb Franks, 28, is the second person sentenced in the plan to abduct Whitmer, a Democrat, which the government has said was orchestrated by anti-government extremists.</p> <p>He pleaded guilty to kidnapping conspiracy in February and cooperated with prosecutors, testifying at a trial in August that resulted in the convictions of two men accused of being the ringleaders, Adam Fox and Barry Croft Jr.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors said in court documents that the plan went beyond abducting the governor.</p> <p>“The trial evidence, including Franks’ testimony, established that Croft and Fox actually intended to murder the Governor in order to trigger a civil war,” prosecutors wrote in a sentencing memorandum.</p> <p>The group Franks was involved with called itself the Wolverine Watchmen, styling itself as a militia group, according to court documents.</p> <p>Franks’ attorney, Scott Graham, wrote in court documents that Franks “was a minor participant in all this” and that he was emotionally lost and looking for acceptance. His stepbrother, his second stepfather and his mother all died in the years before the plan, Graham wrote.</p> <p>“Tragically, he followed the wrong people here. He did not lead them. He masterminded nothing,” Graham wrote in his sentencing memo.</p> <p>Six people were indicted federally in the case: Four have pleaded guilty or been convicted at trial, and a jury acquitted two, Daniel Harris and Brandon Caserta.</p> <p>Ty Garbin, the second man who pleaded guilty, cooperated with prosecutors and testified at trial and was ultimately sentenced to 2½ years in prison.</p> <p>Garbin was initially sentenced in August 2021 to 75 months, or 6¼ years; the sentence was reduced later. Fox and Croft have not been sentenced. Fox is scheduled to be sentenced Dec. 12, and Croft is scheduled to be sentenced Dec. 28, according to court records.</p> <p>The investigation began when an Army veteran, Dan Chappel, joined the Watchmen group in early 2020 but became alarmed by talk of killing police. He became an FBI informant in the case and was a key witness at trial.</p> <p>Graham, Franks' attorney, did not immediately reply to a request for comment Thursday night.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 UN calls for help amid gangs siege Haiti
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/calls-humanitarian-corridor-gangs-siege-haiti-91135679
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- The United Nations is proposing a “humanitarian corridor” in Haiti's capital to help people get gasoline and aid amid a mounting crisis as gangs keep blockading roads and access to some areas, including to one key fuel terminal in Port-au-Prince.</p> <p>The U.N. office in Haiti said in a press release that the blockades, in particular the one accessing the Varreux fuel terminal, undermine efforts to resolve problems in the Caribbean country, in particular the resurgence of cholera after three years without reported cases.</p> <p>The U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Office in Haiti made the proposal on Wednesday.</p>

	<p>Late Wednesday, Prime Minister Ariel Henry also called for help from the international community to address his country's crisis, worsened last month when he announced that fuel subsidies would be eliminated, causing prices to double and people, including gang members, to protest in the streets.</p> <p>Haiti's most powerful gang even decided to block access to the largest fuel terminal, warning its members will stay there until Henry resigns and prices for fuel are reduced.</p> <p>Since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, violence has soared in Haiti as gangs battle over territory, and the government has struggled to crack down.</p> <p>The U.N. said that the blockade on the fuel terminal "has led to the closure of health centers over the last weeks now, and caused the interruption of water treatment services," posing a problem to prevent cholera.</p> <p>"The crisis that Haiti is going through affects the population throughout the territory and the most vulnerable people are the first to suffer from the blockage," it added on its press release.</p> <p>The fuel depot blocked by gangs has been inoperable since Sept. 12, cutting off about 10 million gallons of diesel and gasoline and more than 800,000 gallons of kerosene stored on site. Many gas stations are closed, and others are quickly running out of supplies.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/06 Thailand mourns staggering loss
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/thailand-mourns-children-slain-police-officer-91150459
GIST	<p>UTHAI SAWAN, Thailand -- Friends hugged sobbing family members struggling with staggering loss Friday in a rural northeastern Thailand community mourning the children and other victims slain by a fired police officer in the nation's deadliest shooting rampage.</p> <p>At least 24 of the 36 people killed in the assault Thursday in the small town of Uthai Sawan were children.</p> <p>On Friday morning, royal and government representatives in white, military-style coats stood in lines to lay wreaths at ceremonial tables in front of the Young Children's Development Center's main door. They were followed by weeping family members, who gathered their hands in prayer before laying white flowers on the wooden floor.</p> <p>"I cried until I had no more tears coming out of my eyes. They are running through my heart," said Seksan Sriraj, 28, whose pregnant wife was a teacher at the center and was due to give birth this month. "My wife and my child have gone to a peaceful place. I am alive and will have to live. If I can't go on, my wife and my child will be worried about me, and they won't be reborn in the next life. That's about it."</p> <p>Many relatives were gathered in front of the child care center to start the process of claiming compensation and psychologists were also sent to the site to help them. Seven of the 10 people who were wounded were still hospitalized Friday.</p> <p>Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Queen Suthida were expected later Friday to visit two hospitals treating the wounded, and Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha was expected to visit the daycare center and the hospitals.</p> <p>When asked whether he thought the child care center was secure enough, Seksan noted the attacker had been a police officer. "He came to do what he had in his mind and was determined to do it. I think everyone did the best they could."</p> <p>Police speculated the gunman targeted the center because it was near his home. They identified him as Panya Kamrap, 34, a former police sergeant fired earlier this year because of a drug charge involving methamphetamine. He had been due to appear in court Friday.</p>

Witnesses said the attacker got out of a car and shot a man eating lunch before pausing to reload. Staff at the child care center locked the door, but the gunman shot his way through it. The children, mainly 2- and 3-year-olds, had been taking an afternoon nap, and photos taken by first responders showed their tiny bodies still lying on blankets.

Panya took his own life after killing his wife and child at home.

Nopparat Langkapin, a local official in Uthai Sawan, said the victims were “all children of our community.”

“Relatives, families and close friends are deeply saddened by this incident. And we all felt this across the community very quickly. Most of us are feeling depressed and sad because they are our children,” he said.

The attack took place in Nongbua Lamphu province, one of the country’s poorest regions.

A video taken by a first responder arriving at the scene showed rescuers rushing into the single-story building past a shattered glass front door, with drops of blood visible on the ground in the entryway. Photos showed slashes to the victims' faces and gunshots to their heads.

In footage posted online after the attack, frantic family members wept outside the building. The floor was smeared with blood, and pictures of the alphabet and other colorful decorations adorned the walls.

Mass shootings are rare but not unheard of in Thailand, which has one of the highest civilian gun ownership rates in Asia, with 15.1 weapons per 100 population compared to only 0.3 in Singapore and 0.25 in Japan. That’s still far lower than the U.S. rate of 120.5 per 100 people, according to a 2017 survey by Australia’s GunPolicy.org nonprofit organization.

The U.S. and Australia expressed sympathy and solidarity. “All Australians send their love and condolences,” Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese tweeted. “This violence is both senseless and heartbreaking,” U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

Thailand's previous worst mass shooting involved a disgruntled soldier who opened fire in and around a mall in the northeastern city of Nakhon Ratchasima in 2020, killing 29 people and holding off security forces for some 16 hours before eventually being killed by them.

Nearly 60 others were wounded in that attack. Its death toll surpassed that of the previously worst attack on civilians, a 2015 bombing at a shrine in Bangkok that killed 20 people. It was allegedly carried out by human traffickers in retaliation for a crackdown on their network.

Last month, a clerk shot co-workers at Thailand’s Army War College in Bangkok, killing two and wounding another before he was arrested.

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HEADLINE	10/06 NZ convictions overturned 3yrs after death
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/zealand-mans-convictions-overturned-years-death-91151264
GIST	<p>WELLINGTON, New Zealand -- New Zealand’s Supreme Court on Friday took the unusual step of overturning a man’s convictions even though he died three years ago.</p> <p>The court found there had been a substantial miscarriage of justice after Peter Ellis was convicted of sexually abusing children at the daycare center where he worked as a teacher more than 30 years ago.</p> <p>Usually appeals end once a complainant dies. But in this case, the court found it was in the interests of justice for the appeal to continue even after Ellis died from cancer in 2019 at age 61.</p> <p>When Ellis was first put on trial in 1993, it was against a global backdrop of concern about satanic ritual abuse.</p>

The case against him relied on the recollections of very young children, and many questioned its merits from the outset. Some believed the fact he was openly gay worked against him.

Ellis was convicted in 1993 on 16 counts of sexual abuse against seven children who attended the Christchurch daycare center. He spent seven years in prison and always maintained his innocence.

The Supreme Court found the evidence of prosecution witness Karen Zelas, a psychiatrist who supervised the interviews of the children, lacked balance and suffered from circular reasoning.

The court found Zelas failed to inform the jury of other possible explanations for behaviors among the children that ranged from bedwetting and sleeping problems to sexualized behavior.

The court also found Zelas hadn't fully explained the risk that the children's evidence had been contaminated, for instance by their parents, who had met with each other before the trial.

Ellis's brother, Mark Ellis, told reporters that the decision had been a long time coming.

"I wish my brother was here, because it was really what he deserved," he said.

However, the parents of some of the children Ellis was accused of abusing said they were "shocked and saddened" by the decision and that the court had favored a criminal over the victims.

One unusual argument made by Ellis's lawyers was that under Indigenous Māori customs and values, a person's "mana" — their prestige and stature — continue after they die. Ellis himself wasn't Māori but the court accepted the argument could apply to any New Zealander.

While the argument didn't end up being a decisive factor, the court found it supported and strengthened its conclusion that the appeal should continue after Ellis's death.

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HEADLINE	10/06 Las Vegas stabbings: 2 dead, 6 injured
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/stabbed-front-las-vegas-casino-victim-dead-police/story?id=91123497
GIST	<p>Two people are dead and three are in critical condition from a series of stabbings outside a Las Vegas casino on Thursday, according to police.</p> <p>There are eight victims total from the incident, which started around 11:40 a.m. local time, Las Vegas police said. They include both locals and tourists, Sheriff Joseph Lombardo said during a press briefing Thursday.</p> <p>The initial stabbing, which occurred on the sidewalk along Las Vegas Boulevard, appears to have been unprovoked, Deputy Chief James LaRochelle told reporters.</p> <p>The suspect then proceeded south and stabbed five more victims, and then an additional victim on Sands Avenue, he said. It's unclear when or where the eighth victim was stabbed.</p> <p>One victim was pronounced dead at the scene, and a second died after being transported to the University Medical Center of Southern Nevada, police said. Three patients are hospitalized in stable condition, police said.</p> <p>The Clark County Office of the Coroner/Medical Examiner identified the two people who died as Brent Allan Hallett, 47, of Las Vegas, and Maris Mareen Digiovanni, 30, of Las Vegas.</p> <p>The suspect was taken into custody within a "matter of minutes" by a security guard and police officer after fleeing the scene, police said.</p>

Return to Top	<p>LaRochelle said the suspect is a man in his 30s who recently arrived in Las Vegas. Police are working to confirm his identity, he said.</p> <p>A large kitchen knife used in the incident has been recovered from the scene, police said. A motive is unknown, according to police.</p> <p>"[It's] hard to comprehend, hard to understand murder investigation," LaRochelle said.</p> <p>The victims will be identified pending family notification, the sheriff said.</p> <p>Authorities stressed there is no known threat to the public at this time, with Lombardo describing the scene of the attacks as "static."</p> <p>"The Strip is secure," he said.</p>
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